



DIALOGUE /  
EGO

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# **Dialogue / Ego:**

## **Real Communication**

**Oli Anderson**

**[dialogueschool.org](http://dialogueschool.org)**

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**Personal and social revolution via  
reality as a mode of communication.**

**Oli Anderson 2017**

# **Human progress through human communication**

Dialogue is a creative way for human beings to communicate with one another, as opposed to the more reactionary and even destructive modes that are commonly accepted as 'civilised' - often labelled as 'debate'. Instead of being the purely intellectual exercise that debate tends to be, dialogue, in its purest and highest form, brings in the experiential and intuitive data of all parties involved in the conversation and uses it as datum for curious and playful exploration.

Dialogue is a powerful way for people to come together, collaborate, and create, but in order for the flower of collective intelligence to blossom most potently and fully, it is vital that those involved in the dialogue are able to manage themselves both internally and externally, in order to approach the discussion with the most creative and productive attitude available to them.

Dialogue of this calibre offers hope for social progress in the sense that, when conflict and disagreement inevitably arise between different social groups, they can learn to see this conflict as a learning opportunity, creating something from the furnace of conflict, instead of merely reacting to each other and producing unnecessary friction and fragmentation.

In order to reach this stage socially, we need creative spaces to practice dialogue with others, unlearn the reliance on debate that we have acquired through conditioning, and learn to detach from our opinions, observing ourselves as communicators instead of asserting ourselves as people with personal agendas.

This is the motivation behind everything you are about to read in this book and it is hoped that, by the end of it, you will be excited about getting involved with tipping the shift in human communication styles from an overall stance of reactive assertion to creative collaboration (See **Personal Revolutions #66: Collaborate / Assert**).

**This book has been designed to introduce readers to the basics of dialogue as a communication medium, and to show some of the benefits that it offers individuals, teams, and societies at large over the more socially accepted style of 'debate'.**

**It brings together the lessons I have learned over the past five years of running dialogue circles, inspired by the work of David Bohm, and also addresses some of the personal disciplines, qualities, and virtues that need to be cultivated so that everybody can step up and contribute to the process of collective creation.**

**It is my belief that dialogue is the unifying force of personal and social revolution because the way that we communicate, with ourselves and the rest of the world, shapes that world for everybody. If you like what you read here, then do whatever you can to take some of these ideas out into the real world - either by sharing this book with others, or by starting a dialogue circle in your own town, city, or organisation.**

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References throughout are made to my other book 'Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness' which explores self-actualisation, or 'Realness', in greater detail (see the 'Glossary' at the back for any terms you are curious about).

## **Dialogue isn't a competition to be the smartest or the most correct person in the room; it is a collaboration to find the truth.**

The culture of debate appears to be centred around notions of finding and upholding the 'truth', but, on closer inspection, we can see that the dictates of human ego - the **fear** of being 'wrong', the **pride** taken in being 'right', and the **desire** to be seen by others according to a certain image we carry of ourselves - often cloud this truth behind a miasma of human insecurity and the wobbliness of personal agendas.

In contrast, dialogue in its realest form rests on the assumption that human beings do not have to seek self-esteem in the validation of their opinions and ideas, but that they are able to communicate with others from a place of unwavering self-acceptance, or realness. It is not our opinions that have intrinsic value, but our contribution to the process of discovery. And, you don't have to be 'right' or 'wrong' to contribute.

Once we have cultivated this realness, we are able to communicate in a way that is outcome-independent, removing the need for others to be 'wrong' so that we can be 'right', and realising that our opinions and ideas are just something that, as physicist and dialogue theorist David Bohm says, we *have*, not that we *are*. Our realness allows us to let go of our identification with the purely conceptual and gift these things to others as something that will bring everybody closer to the truth - if they are handled in the right way.

***Instead of looking at things in terms of 'my truth' and 'your truth', we learn to use both of these perspectives to uncover and take us all closer to 'the truth'.***

Dialogue teaches us to loosen up and to see our opinions and points of view as something that are fluid and changing, and that we can be perfectly happy and effective in the world of communication by acknowledging the uncertainty of our views and the tenuousness of our grasp on them.

Instead of thinking of our personal truth as something that is either/or, we understand that there are few if any real facts, in the **World of Symbols**, but myriad interpretations, because, when it comes to conceptual knowledge, we may hold the truth in our hands to a certain degree of probability, but never all the way.

This liberates us to let go and to get into the flow of shared communication and the collaboration of **Collective Creative Intelligence**, instead of seeing ourselves as individuals with agendas that need to vanquish the opposing views of those around us. Debate is a zero sum game, where my victory means your defeat; as an ideal, dialogue is a non-zero sum game, where a win for one of us is a win for all (see **Personal Revolutions #78: Interpretations / Facts**).

# We have to accept that much of reality is ineffable and so to understand it we can't rely on words alone.

Debate is based on the assumption that everything in reality can be understood, described, and explained through words or concepts alone. Dialogue acknowledges that, due to the limitations of language and human perception, the most effective way of uncovering and moving closer to the 'truth' is to bring in all available sources of verbal and nonverbal information for exploration and learning.

This may include human experience, intuition and emotion, as well as creative techniques such as metaphor and storytelling that may serve to bridge the ineffables of reality with whatever the humans involved in the dialogue are capable of articulating.

*Sometimes, the reason that reality or truth is ineffable is because whoever happens to be speaking lacks the vocabulary to discuss and articulate the issue at hand; sometimes, the truth is ineffable because no words are or will ever be capable of describing such things.*

In both cases, dialogue allows people to get closer to the truth by encouraging speakers to try and get their points across creatively, if not one hundred percent accurately - always impossible anyway - and for listeners to listen with the **Principle of Charity** - actively seeking to uncover the meaning in what is being said, instead of shooting it down for not fitting into a certain limited intellectual expectation, as is more commonly the case with debate.

This is the realest approach to collaboration, with all parties actively seeking the truth in what everybody else is saying, and co-creating something powerful and new with whatever is uncovered. Instead of each coming at it from a stance of 'I have the Truth', we switch to a stance of 'Collectively, we can create something together that allows all of us to move closer to the Truth (whatever the hell that is)'.

# **Dialogue is an opportunity for people to communicate from outside the limitations of their points of view. When we enter a circle of dialogue, there are no labels, only human beings.**

Debate often has less to do with moving towards the truth than it does with defending our points of view. Depending on our attitudes towards our opinions, and our attachment to the illusion of control that they lend our lives, this can either be helpful or a hindrance.

If we are unwilling to accept that we might be ‘wrong’, or to open our minds and our hearts to alternative ways of viewing the world, then we will enter the ring already limiting the possible outcomes of the exchange; if everybody is trying to defend their ego’s and the points of view that they are encased within, as opposed to testing or refining these points of view, then the chances of anybody learning anything new are minimised.

You have to be open to the truth to find it and you can’t do this if you are already convinced that you have it (and no single human being does – at least not conceptually). When we enter a circle of dialogue we should ideally be entering a container that allows us to be human beings and nothing more or less, because of the ego’s grandiosity.

When we enter the circle we should try to forget about the labels that we brought with us, no longer being ‘Christians’, ‘Muslims’, or ‘Humanists’, forgetting that we are ‘English’, or ‘African’, or ‘Iranian’ - or whatever else - and simply sitting together as human beings sharing the similarities of their experience and understanding, appreciating the differences, but ultimately learning and uncovering new insights that arise outside the limitations of individual points of view, not from within them.

**We all have something to learn from others and we all have something to teach; this is all we really need to get started.**

# **When people challenge your ideas, they help you (whether they know it or not). Avoid clouding your vision by becoming emotional because you perceive an attack where there isn't one.**

A dialogue circle is essentially a creative container for you to put the diamond of your opinions and theories before the scrutiny of others so that they can help you to polish it until it shines more brightly under the light of truth.

If you're too concerned about being 'right' or 'wrong' then you will be more likely to hold back on the delivery of your truth, because you are concerned that people will judge you on it. For this reason, dialogue requires that we develop certain higher level human qualities and virtues and that we maintain awareness of our highest human values, such as truth and creativity.

In order to get closer to the truth we may have to make ourselves vulnerable and this requires a certain degree of trust in those around us. It also requires that we cultivate the skills that allow others to feel that they can trust us. In other words, that we need to work on becoming 'real' in ourselves (to use the language of **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**).

*To make the most of the dialogue circle, as in life itself, we have to ready ourselves to learn from conflict, instead of running from it. We have to learn to see all conflict as a learning opportunity, so that we can remain calm when we find it and it finds us.*

Perhaps it's helpful to think of the dialogue circle as a river that washes over us, the process of which leaves only the realest of our truths still standing to shine.

This process may be mildly frustrating as we clash with those around us, maybe even painful if we have the courage to let go of old ‘Truths’ and take on new ones over time, but in the long term it will help that diamond to shine more brightly if we can remain mindful of the fact that we enter dialogue to learn, not to prove anything, or to cling to things that never really existed in the first place (see **Personal Revolutions #106: Motivation / Fear**).

## **Dialogue is about creating awareness through self-observation; it starts from the inside out, not the outside in.**

The only thing that you have any real ‘control’ over in the universe is yourself, though even that is limited in its scope. Attempts to control, persuade, or influence other people will always be limited because people only change when they are ready to change, and human beings have a tendency to become defensive when they become aware of somebody trying to change their views for them.

For these reasons, when engaged in dialogue, and probably many more, it is more helpful to forget about what other people are doing and to focus on yourself; observing whatever emotions and thoughts arise inside of you, noticing whenever you behave automatically, reacting with whatever assumptions, expectations, and intentions that the ego’s autopilot has deemed appropriate at a given moment.

Know yourself well enough to come from a stance of ‘You versus Me’ as opposed to the defensive ‘Me versus You’ that debate has us accustomed to (see **Personal Revolutions #26: You vs Me / Me vs You**).

Focus on yourself and yourself alone. Listen with an open mind to what other people are saying, but stop trying to persuade them of things, stop trying to ‘fix’ their point of view, so that it is better aligned with your own. Forget about how you think the views of others ‘should’ be and start learning what you can from what these views actually are to polish your own insight and experience.

See yourself as a scientist observing something under experimentation without trying to influence or disturb it. When you judge or try to fix the opinions of others you lose all hope of ever understanding them. Listen to what unfolds as though it has no connection to you, remove yourself and your prejudices from the equation, and allow yourself to learn instead of only trying to teach or ‘fix’ others based on attachments to what you think you already know.

## **Debate is an attempt to cling to the illusion of control provided by a point of view designed to keep the ego in place; dialogue is an attempt to dance with the unknown at the risk of losing what we think we know.**

There is much talk in **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness** about the benefits of switching to a stance of uncertainty over certainty, and the idea that doing so puts us in better alignment with the fundamental nature of reality.

Essentially, if we can’t know anything with absolute certainty because our understanding is always limited, conceptual knowledge is often flawed, and our perception of surrounding reality is constrained from the outset, then tricking ourselves into believing that we have a certain, cognitive grasp on the truth will always be folly.

If this is the case, then the whole idea of debate is futile; if it involves different parties coming together to defend the tenuous abstractions that they have constructed to defend their grasp of the world, then it essentially involves a battle of one illusion against another.

You could argue about differences between points of view until the end of time; if you want to get anywhere you have to be open to the uncertainty of your own views and actively seek out similarities with the views of others, so that you can start building on the common ground between them.

Real communication, in the form of dialogue, means that we overcome, or at least ride through, our fear of the unknown, and risk losing what we think we know in order to find something that shines even more brightly. This means that dialogue involves communicating from the most basic level of our being; the inner level of our values, experience, and realness.

Unlike debate, where we tend to argue from the web of theories and ideas that we have strung together to explain away some of the things we dislike about the world, or to keep us enthralled in the thrill of 'control', dialogue means that we remain open-minded, even to the possibility of ourselves being 'wrong', and having to face the fact that much related to the process of understanding the world and reality is beyond any control whatsoever. Paradoxically perhaps, to make any sense of it all, we have to befriend chaos.

**Dialogue is about freeing human beings from the beliefs and attitudes that make human beings miserable.**

If everything goes well, entering a dialogue is a process that allows you to enter yourself. When we let go of the unreal need for control and certainty, when we stop judging ourselves on the validation our opinions receive, of being either 'right' or 'wrong', when we learn to stop focusing on differences before similarities, when we find the confidence to trust others enough to put ourselves out there and be vulnerable, when we realise that we are not our opinions, assumptions, and expectations - whatever else it may be - when all of these things come together, we realise that we are free, fluid and fundamental to the world that we live in.

***We can sit back and observe instead of feeling like we have to react all the time. None of us have to prove anything to anybody except ourselves. We can let go.***

Without freedom, 'happiness' will always be limited. A dialogue circle is a container for cultivating realness, where people are free to speak about whatever they feel they need to talk about, however, and whenever seems necessary.

This requires a commitment on the side of all involved to listen to one another fully and with rapt attention, giving each other the gift of truly being 'seen', hopefully understood, and free to return out in the world with the attitude cultivated within the circle to make the rest of the world a slightly better place as we bring more realness into it.

**Through real communication, we build connections; first with ourselves, and then with everything beyond.**

## **Dialogue reminds us that we can question to build, not only to doubt or deconstruct.**

Dialogue helps us to learn more about ourselves and the world by reframing the way we communicate, so that we move consistently towards wholeness instead of only ever towards fragmentation.

If we are able to stay mindful of why we have entered a circle of dialogue, we can remind ourselves that we are listening to learn, not only to confirm the views that we already have, and this can be reflected in the manner in which we choose to ask each other questions as we explore each other's views with an attitude of curiosity, creativity and real service by making our values valuable to others (see **Personal Revolutions #52: Wholeness / Fragmentation**).

Instead of looking only for flaws or holes in the views presented to us by other members of the circle, we look into the strength of the foundation on which these views have been constructed. We ask questions that help us to uncover the chain of reasoning that led our conversation partners to reach such conclusions, digging into their experience and understanding of the world - if they feel comfortable doing so - and asking questions that help everybody involved to see things more clearly and acquire insight.

This is opposed to debate, where our questions tend to be framed in the negative, the ego looking for reasons to doubt opposing views, so that it can maintain its own. If you don't leave a dialogue session at least wondering if you've been wrong about something, then you might have wasted your time, or be hiding from yourself in some way.

**Practicing dialogue helps you to cultivate a realness that allows you to face reality on its own terms, not just the terms you'd like it to have in order to remain in a comfort zone that holds you back anyway.**

As we have alluded to already, dialogue is not just about the skills of critical thinking and understanding needed to examine **what** people, including ourselves, are thinking, but also to look at **how** and **why** we think in the ways that we do.

Dialogue is about attitude, about a way of being that allows us to communicate from a place of fearlessness, surrender to reality on its own terms, and increased momentary presence as we attempt to release ourselves from the mask of assumptions, intentions, and expectations that we often hide behind and try to impose, or project, upon the people and the world around us. It is about putting the ego in the backseat and communicating from the realness in ourselves instead (see **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**).

*Cultivating a connection to our own realness in a dialogue circle gives us an opportunity to be more fearless, accepting, and present in the world beyond the circle.*

Life being what it is we will constantly be challenged, we will always face problems, and we will always be tested by new experiences and information that asks us to release ourselves from the hold that our beliefs and belief systems have over us.

When you live in a **World of Relationships**, the realest world of all, one of the best things that you can do for yourself is to develop an attitude that ensures the way you communicate with yourself, others, and the world and reality at large, allows you to continue flowing into improved relationships, not away from them. Dialogue done right gives you this opportunity.

## **Dialogue can help you find out if you've been brainwashed or not.**

Putting yourself through the process of challenging your beliefs in a dialogue circle helps you to discover how attached you might be to them and to work on a process of releasing yourself if needs be.

If you find yourself screaming and shouting when people challenge you, or when you are faced with information that may threaten to pop the bubble that you have built for yourself, then there's a good chance that you have allowed yourself to become 'brainwashed' and to attach the security of your identity with the security of your views. You need to shift into the observer state, remembering once again that your views and opinions about the world are interpretations, not facts, and that they are something that you *have*, not that you personally *are* (see **Personal Revolutions #78: Interpretations / Facts**).

In the most extreme case, you might feel that you would die for your beliefs. If this is the case, then your beliefs own you, not the other way round, because you have reached a state where they have given them so much power that they can no longer be even questioned.

Any beliefs that prevent you from growing into yourself and your realness are bad for you and the world around you. If you react emotionally when beliefs that you hold so strongly are being challenged then it is quite likely that you are acting out of fear. Ask yourself: 'What am I afraid of?'

Dialogue comes from a place where you own yourself; debate comes from a place where your beliefs own you. Give yourself the opportunity to at least make sure you have given yourself to something that deserves it.

**Dialogue teaches you to listen  
through your emotions, not to  
become distracted or distanced from  
the truth because of them.**

To truly listen to another person is to give them a gift, the giving of which requires emotional intelligence and an ability to see somebody and what they have to offer as they actually are, not as our ego's wish them to be.

If we listen only in relation to our own demands, from within our own web of expectations, and only ever in comparison to our own point of view, then we only see an **idea** of the person or people in front of us, and not the people themselves. Listening fully to somebody is difficult enough already, purely due to all the social and experiential conditioning we bring to each situation with us; when we allow our emotions to get in the way things become even more unnecessarily difficult.

Making the most of dialogue means dealing with our emotions in a way that allows us to accept them as part of our experience, but to ensure that they do not distance us from the truth any more than is necessary. This involves learning to manage ourselves internally, knowing how we are feeling at a given time and why what other people have said in dialogue have made us feel this way.

This means that we allow ourselves to feel whatever we are feeling, but to feel the truth through these feelings, instead of confusing these emotions for the truth behind whatever utterances have raised them within us.

The truth will always set you free of the ego, which is always untrue, but first the truth will probably irritate you as you try cling to comfortable illusions; remember this and find the courage to run through it rather than away from it; this is the attitude that will ensure you learn as much as you can over time and continue to become more real in yourself and the world around you.

**Dialogue unplugs you from your own programming as you become more real; debate turns up the voltage and entrenches you more deeply.**

By teaching us to detach ourselves from our opinions, beliefs, and ideals about these things, dialogue presents us with the opportunity to free ourselves from the limitations of our programming and cultural conditioning.

Because it encourages us to look at these things as separate from ourselves, to analyse them for truth, instead of to merely present them as the truth, dialogue puts us in a position of power over our opinions because it requires that we see them as they actually are, not only as we wish them to be.

In a way, every opinion that we hold is an instance of the past having a hold over us, because nothing in reality is static and so it is irrational to assume that our opinions will always ring true in the symphony of an unfolding world. This doesn't mean that all opinions will go out of date, not over the duration of our lifetimes, at least; but it does mean that we should be open to the idea of the need to learn a new dance step or two as reality plays a different tune (see **Personal Revolutions #12: Flux / Stasis**).

Debate entrenches us more deeply in our conditioning simply due to the fact that every time we try and defend something we become more vehemently attached to it.

When we defend something, we become invested in it, and it becomes a part of us, and, the more we fight for something, the more we need it to be true so that we don't have to feel that we have expended energy unnecessarily.

Every time we act automatically, every time we act without thinking in order to uphold a certain world view or set of opinions, we are giving these things more power over us and entwining them around our psyches with increased vigour. Dialogue is an opportunity to create a healthy relationship with our own world views; debate is about upholding the dysfunctional relationships that we already have with them.

**To engage in dialogue is to serve others via whatever is real inside you; to engage in debate is to ultimately serve the illusions of your ego.**

To find the truth you have to serve the truth and value whatever you find more than you do your ego. When we enter a dialogue circle, we ideally have to be able to detach ourselves from what we think that we personally know about ourselves and the world so that we can serve the process of helping everybody discover what they know in reality.

Dialogue isn't about serving ourselves in the sense of reinforcing the views that we already hold and allowing the short bursts of validation that we receive to uphold the scaffolding of our fragile egos; nor is it about bringing our own agenda to the table and convincing the others involved in the dialogue that the point of view that we have constructed to explain away the world and our place in it is the right one.

In dialogue, as in reality, in our experience, there is no 'Final Solution', only a great jigsaw puzzle that each individual holds a distinct piece of, and that all *might* be able to make some sense of if they can be creative enough to put these pieces into a cohesive whole and look at the big picture (see **Personal Revolutions #52: Wholeness / Fragmentation**).

Real communication in these terms is about the virtues of collaboration and **Collective Creative Intelligence**; it is about bringing everybody's strengths and experiences to the table so that we can build something wonderful together. The only way that we can achieve this state is to forget about our inflated state as individual egos, and to see ourselves as the interdependent variables within a wider system.

*Instead of coming to the circle to be served by the rest of the group, each member of the dialogue circle needs to come from a stance that sees them as being there to serve the truth, the other members of the group, and the collective creativity that is possible when all work together with reality to be more real.*

A consciously chosen attitude of real service means that members are aware of their own emotional landscape, aware of their own agendas, and aware of their own expectations, assumptions, and opinions. This awareness allows people to offer these things as a gift to the rest of the circle, detaching from them personally, and allowing them to be used in the creative process of discovery, rather than clinging to them, due to the demands of the ego, and preventing the ball rolling on the journey towards truth.

**Social change is a communication problem and the solution is communicating to serve the realness in ourselves and others, not only to serve the ego.**

## **Dialogue with the self is the source of all insight and insight is the only thing that can change your life.**

Your realness, in the form of your connection to your true self, is a diamond, and every choice that you make in your life will either polish it so that it becomes more visible, or it will heap another shovel full of dirt in the way and stop anything from shimmering at all.

Dialogue is a way of learning to make the right choices by opening yourself up to the insight provided by the learning opportunities of working through conflict, so that you can create new insight, in the form of both truth about yourself and truth about the world.

Dialogue affords you this opportunity by allowing you to enter an exchange of ideas with the knowledge that all insight arises only from the inside out, not the outside in. The only way to have collective insight is for each individual member of a dialogue circle to be open to their own insight and the only way to open to insight is to assume that you have room to grow. This is why a stance of uncertainty will always bring more to your life than a stance of certainty (see **Personal Revolutions #10: Uncertainty / Certainty**).

Whereas debate is an opportunity for us to build resilience through fighting and learning to deal with externalities, dialogue is ultimately an opportunity for us to work on what goes on inside of us and build a stronger foundation from the inside out. All dialogue is essentially a dialogue with the self, because, when done in the most real and most powerful way, we are constantly connected to the truth that originates inside of us.

***To make the most of dialogue we have to know our own truth with as much awareness as possible, so that, whenever something new arises within us, we are able to create new insights by allowing ourselves to move into and then through it.***

Dialogue with the self is ultimately about awareness; once we cultivate awareness of what is unfolding in terms of our own truth, we are more acutely aware of what is unfolding for those around us. Once we have a healthier relationship with our own truth, we will have a healthier relationship with other individuals, then teams, then societies, then cultures or worlds as a whole. It all starts with the individual and the ability to communicate with our realness in a way that nurtures it.

## **Most arguments are about defending our programming; all resolutions are reached through a process of unlearning then relearning.**

Most debates are essentially attempts for one person to defend their personal programming against the infiltration of the personal programming of another. When most people argue, they are actually arguing automatically from the vantage point of a point of view erected to keep the ego in place, using the boundaries of these points of view to set boundaries on the truth.

When we argue automatically, we override our capacity to think consciously and to be present with what actually stands in front of us; we are lost in a reactive state that sees us becoming defensive - this defensiveness forcing us to cling even more vehemently to our points of view and to become further and further entrenched within them.

This attachment to our points of view is a form of madness: It means that when we argue with another we are not actually arguing with them, but with the threat that we perceive them to present to the illusions of control that our ego has become most comfortable with. We tend to argue with phantoms because our emotions distract us from the reality that stands in front of us.

To make the most of a dialogue, or indeed any communication at all, we have to be ready to unlearn what we think we know, so that we can learn something that is even worthier of being known because it is more *real*. We have to acknowledge that our points of view are creations that we erected to make sense of reality and our experience, not reality or experience in themselves.

We have to become aware of when we are acting automatically; we have to become aware of when our emotions are involuntarily engaged; we have to be open to the probability of being wrong, the limitations of the individual ego, and the potential gifts of a **Collective Creative Intelligence** that helps individuals tune into their own realness. Most of all, we have to believe that the pain of unlearning is worth it in the long run and be able to ride out our edge for the benefit of finding a new centre to build upon (see **Personal Revolutions #145: Edge / Centre**).

## **Dialogue helps us to acknowledge that we see the world not as it is, but as we are.**

When we enter a dialogue circle a basic agreement has hopefully already been established between all members that all those partaking in the session are free to say whatever they like, however they like, whenever they like.

In exchange for this freedom of expression is the cost of having to manage ourselves so that we are able to serve the needs of the group as a whole, to pay attention to the flow of collective meaning, the subtleties of those contributing towards it, and the relevancy of our own possible contributions to what unfolds.

It also means that we have to be mindful of the demands of our own ego, which most commonly manifests itself in the expressions **The Blind Trinity** of **FEAR** ("I'd better not say what I want to say or I will be seen as wrong/disapproved of/etc.), **PRIDE** ("This is a perfect opportunity for me to say something that will make me sound brilliant"), and **DESIRE** to be seen in alignment with a certain self-image ("I'm a brooding poet/comedian/bad boy so I can only say X").

Dialogue is suggestive of the idea that external reality itself has no inherent 'meaning' and that the way that we experience it is a reflection of our own internal reality - whatever 'good' or 'bad' feelings that we experience do not exist 'out' in the world itself, but live within us.

If we are scared to speak out, for example, it is because we see the external world as a threat for some reason and our ego has led us to act in a fearful way; perhaps we are too attached to the ideas of 'right' and 'wrong' and what these things mean for our sense of personal identity; perhaps we wish to be approved of and are unsure of whether or not our opinions will get the desired ego stroke if shared with others.

Or perhaps our ego is holding us back out of pride; we think that our views are so well established that we don't need to share them; or perhaps the opposite, we feel that everybody needs 'fixing' to our own way of seeing, and so we impose our agenda on them. But **Real Communication** is about speaking through the ego's illusions, not letting them hold us back.

In both of these cases, our contribution to the dialogue circle stems from our relationship with ourselves and the dialogue that we are having within.

Once we have started to cultivate realness within ourselves, once we acknowledge that we only have interpretations, not facts, we will be much bolder in sharing our views and opinions, because we see that they are tools that we use to make sense of the world, something that we *have*, not that we *are*.

We will be able to offer them up to the rest of the group for scrutiny, regardless of the outcome of such, because we are no longer *attached* to them. If we see the circle as a threat, then chances are there is something inside of us that makes us experience it that way; we can either try to figure this out by ourselves, or to raise our fears with the group and watch it dissolve.

**We see the world not as it is, but as we are, and, as a dialogue circle is a microcosm of reality, we see the circle not as it is, but as we are; understanding that the world starts from the inside out liberates us to truly be real within in it.**

**Dialogue shows that the way that we currently think about and discuss our problems is the main source of the problems that we have. The main problem is thinking that we have problems.**

In the book THOUGHT AS A SYSTEM, **David Bohm** draws out the idea that thoughts are not distinct from the body, emotions, and even environment, but that all of these things are distinct processes within a wider, holistic system. This system of thought doesn't just report on the world, as we may intuitively believe to be the case, but also participates in the world.

According to Bohm, there is no distinction between thoughts and the physical 'products' of thoughts, as they all exist along the same continuum. This applies to the 'thoughts' that led to the buildings and

vehicles that grace the high streets of our towns and cities, and even the items that surround us, be it something as simple as the table in the living room, or the complexities of the smart phone in our pockets.

Everywhere we look are the thoughts of other people and these thoughts serve as stimuli for our own thoughts; to live in the modern world is to live in both the world as it actually stands in necessity, but also within the symbolic veil of thought upon thought that human beings have built as a reaction to this necessary state (see **Personal Revolutions #14: Human Order (Symbolism) / Universal Order (Necessity)**).

*Without awareness of the inherent link between the thoughts in our head and the world at our feet we are less likely to be able to work on changing our ways of thinking so that we can create a better, more coherent, and more real, world for ourselves as a species over time.*

Though it may be impossible for us to gain total control over the thought system that we have evolved, we are able to build awareness of some of its weak points, so that we can work on shifting in a more positive human direction overall.

The most influential ‘weak point’ of the thought system on its default setting is its tendency to work towards fragmentation instead of towards wholeness. This manifests itself in the segregation and separation of humanity, as well as the planet as a whole, often drawing imaginary lines that are eventually reified and treated as a reality between people, geographical locations, and even ideas themselves (see **#53: You Belong to The Earth / The Earth Belongs to You**).

This fragmentation is reinforced and made manifest whenever we react, or lash out, on autopilot when presented with points of views or ideas that challenge our own programming, and ideas about what the ‘truth’ of the world might be.

We have discussed this already, but it is worth repeating that whenever we react to one another, instead of at least attempting to build something real together, we are moving in the direction of unnecessary fragmentation, instead of a wholeness that may lead to a better world for all of us.

Amongst many other things, dialogue teaches us to see that the world is not just a reflection of our thoughts, but a product of our thought itself. If we wish to create a less fragmented and unreal world, we have to acknowledge the limitations of our thought system, its natural tendencies to compartmentalise and divide, through mere concepts, and our own attitudes towards ourselves and the products of our thoughts in relation to how they 'create' the world around us.

Without doing this, we are likely to get caught up in cycles of fragmentary thinking that is then used to deal with the fragmentation it has created in the first place. Social progress comes when we use thought to build together with our responses in a creatively intelligent way, not just react to what the ego shows us.

## **Dialogue is about wholeness; debate is about fragmentation. To move towards 'wholeness', we have to accept ourselves enough to potentially polarise.**

In dialogue, as in life, there are only two directions that we can really ever choose to move in: either towards wholeness or towards fragmentation.

This basic duality is made clear in the way that we choose to do just about anything - whenever we choose to react instead of choosing to create, for example; or when we choose to fear instead of love, or whenever we choose to focus on differences at the neglect of similarities. In all these cases, we are choosing to move in a direction that fragments, rather than one that unifies.

This fragmentary proclivity serves a useful function in helping us to make our way through life as 'individuals', but if we forget to see this function for what it is - a tool - and instead mistake it for the way that things actually are, then we are liable to lapse into ideas and behaviours that ultimately carry us away from our realness and the world (see **Personal Revolutions #125: Mental Partner / Mental Master**).

***If we become too passively attached to the ideas of 'reality' presented to us by thought in the service of the ego, then the reality that we find ourselves in will become a product of that thought. And as thought is fragmented so too will become the world.***

Dialogue is about communicating in a way that moves individuals, groups, and communities towards wholeness; debate is about reinforcing fragmentation that is already seen to exist in the world and/or creating even more of it.

We have already discussed how whether or not speakers are involved in dialogue or debate depends ultimately on the attitude that speakers have towards their own realness, and it is important to remember this when we ask ourselves whether we are moving towards either wholeness or fragmentation from one moment to the next.

To find a relationship with 'wholeness' in ourselves, we benefit from cultivating a relationship with ourselves built around self-acceptance; this is contrasted to self-esteem, where we are more likely to primarily seek validation from sources outside of ourselves.

With self-acceptance comes an internal foundation of strength, aka '**Realness**', an acceptance of the fluidity of our views and opinions, and an understanding that we are not in competition with others, nor trying to prove anything to them. We are simply with them, as part of the whole, and sharing our understanding of it to enhance the collective understanding of all involved (see **Personal Revolutions #54: Self-Acceptance / Self-Esteem**).

How are these ideas of self-acceptance and self-esteem linked to ideas of wholeness and fragmentation in dialogue? When we have cultivated the skills and qualities required to become more self-accepting or real, we will be more polarising but potent with our views and ideas, because we do not attach our self-worth to how they are received by other people.

Once we know what we think to the greatest extent possible, but understand that what we have at our disposal is only our best interpretation, not 'facts', we will be able to share these views with others at their most concentrated, not needing to dilute them in the hope of being approved of, accepted, or applauded. We know that if our views and opinions are being attacked, it is nothing to be taken personally.

**When we have cultivated realness, we can deliver our 'truth' more honestly and directly, in a way that makes the truth more accessible to all involved in the dialogue, or with those who share our lives with us.**

## **Dialogue helps human beings to tune themselves into reality by exploring the gap between the mental models, or schema, that they carry of the world and the world itself.**

Everything changes and none of us can know anything unfolding within life's ever-flowing tapestry of meaning with one hundred percent conceptual certainty or accuracy.

Really, this is a simple matter of logic: the external world that we perceive is really a representation beamed from our brain to our conscious experience and this perception is circumscribed by our own biological limitations (we can't perceive infrared or hear certain sounds, for example); we are incapable of seeing 'things-in-themselves', due to the fact that to be conscious of something there has to be a knowing observer, or **Subject**, that forms an interdependent relationship with whatever **Object** is being observed.

To complicate things even further, the way that we intellectualise or conceptualise these raw perceptions is more often than not based on assumptions, expectations, and intentions that we have carried over from the past and which we use to try and make sense of the present.

The short-version? Objects and subjects are dependent on each other, all thoughts are by nature incomplete, and our flawed perceptions of 'reality' are often clouded even more vehemently by the web of intellectual representations that we project upon them. If we try to communicate with each other without acknowledging at least some of

this, we will never be able communicate with each other in a real way (see #149: **Interdependence (Relationships) / Independence (Things)**).

Collectively, these perceptions and intellectualisations come together to form heuristics, mental models, or schemas, which act as shortcuts for understanding and categorising what we perceive. Quite frequently, these mental models are accurate *enough* to help us deal with the reality that stands in front of us but, just as frequently, they can lead incoherent behaviour, because the ever-changing reality around us means that there is a gap between the reality that we are EXPECTING to see and the reality that is actually available to us.

Thinking in heuristics and mental shortcuts may have helped human beings to get as far as we already have and to make the progress that has carried us to the stars and back, but unless we are aware of our tendency to rely on opinions and mental models that are really just assumptions carried over from the past, we will miss opportunities to create potent new worlds as we dance to the tune of what is actually emerging, not the funeral dirge of a past long gone.

Dialogue helps us to find the world and to live real life on its own terms by asking those participating in dialogue to be present in each. By detaching ourselves from our opinions and expectations, by seeing our mental models as helpful tools, not ‘reality’ itself, we are able to allow ourselves to shed this false skin when necessary and see things more like they actually are.

Though we will probably never be able to see ‘things-in-themselves’, or to think and act with total objectivity, dialogue gives us an opportunity to let go of some of the things that move us further away from the real, and closer towards the fragmented version of reality that we use to make sense of the world.

When we enter a dialogue, we acknowledge that there is an inherent and unavoidable gap between our thoughts about reality and reality itself. Though this gap may always be there, no matter what we do, dialogue shows us that, if we communicate with the right attitude and understanding of what is possible for human beings, we can serve to bridge this gap, rather than to make the gulf even wider and move us all even further away from the ‘Truth’ that we need in order to live without unnecessary friction in our lives.

# **Dialogue shows us that most attempts at controlling other people are arbitrary because, in the World of Symbols, there are no facts, only interpretations.**

Dialogue allows us to see that so much of what unfolds in the social and organisational realms is arbitrary and based on assumptions, expectations, and control structures that exist as abstractions from reality and not within reality itself. It shows us that, time and time again, the systems that we operate and live within are simply a set of assumptions about how things 'should' be done and what human beings 'ought' to be.

*Though many of these systems serve important functions and enhance our lives, by allowing for the smooth operation of important processes, many others do not serve human beings, but are based on the assumption that human beings should serve them.*

By allowing us to delve into the fundamental assumptions of the thoughts and ideas that have led to the construction of the control systems that we live and work within, dialogue offers us the opportunity to tear these things down where they are ineffective or out-of-sync with higher level human values, so that we can work on building something more real, human, and effective (see **Personal Revolutions #36: Human / Person**).

This is why dialogue has the greatest potential as a potent force of social progress: When done 'right', it removes all social barriers to the 'Truth', such as consensual ideas of hierarchy and assertion, rooted in assumption alone, and shifts everybody involved into a state of collective collaboration. In the terms that have used throughout this book, it allows us to start moving towards 'wholeness', to the furthest extent possible, and away from fragmentation.

At its most furious, dialogue is a revolutionary force because it asks us to look at the fundamental assumptions on which our lives have been built, and to question them with an attitude of playful exploration and curiosity. It asks us to look at the systems that we have found ourselves in with a real attitude of uncertainty, seeing whatever exists as a matter of human choice as a matter of contingency, and, therefore, something that can be changed with enough effort over time (see **Personal Revolutions #1: Physical Laws / Sociocultural Laws**).

In contrast, ‘debate’ usually only focuses on the symptoms of the fundamental problems that reactionary thought forces us to contend with (fragmentation, reactivity, lack of presence or realness in our lives, etc.) and thus locks us within the ‘bubble’ of whatever structures this thought has already produced.

When we start to think and see the world in this way, we become increasing aware of the ways in which people and systems try to control us and we are able to both free ourselves from their influence to some extent and assert ourselves when it is necessary to do so. This is why personal revolution, in the way we communicate with ourselves, leads to social revolution.

*If there are few, if any certain conceptual ‘facts’, and only interpretations, in the realm of human symbols, then any time somebody attempts to control you by asking you to think, feel, or behave in accordance with certain arbitrary ‘shoulds’, they are attempting to impose a set of assumptions about ways of being in the world.*

More often than not, people do not know the reasons for the ‘shoulds’ that they are asking you to behave in accordance with, except perhaps besides the idea that ‘it’s tradition’ or ‘just the way it is’ (when it clearly isn’t).

An unfortunate ‘truth’ about life in the social realm is that people will attempt to control you in order to maintain their own equanimity, or social status, and keep their ego’s in place. Dialogue reminds you to see all of these contingencies as precisely that, things that could be different, and so something which you almost always have power to respond to on your own real terms.

**Dialogue is a force for social change because it allows us to live out our own realness, not the unreality that a purely symbolic world often wants us to live in accordance with.**

**Dialogue helps us to understand that the main reason people try to ‘fix’ us is often because they fear that themselves or their views are broken in some way. It shows us that the state of the world is linked to our human relationships with our own shame.**

If everything in the world was ideal, nothing ever hurt, and we were all going to live happily and forever after, perhaps humanity would reach a state where World Peace® was a reality and nobody ever disagreed on anything. Unfortunately, in a world of limited resources, limited time, and each of the contenders for these prizes being blessed with an evolved set of inviolable emotions such as fear, anxiety, and guilt, the chances of us reaching this state without sedating everybody or lobotomising them at birth is negligible at best.

What is the long and short of this grandiloquent and perhaps even pessimistic account of the human condition and the reality that it transpires within? The answer is simple: conflict, anxiety, and many other uncomfortable facets of our experience are inevitable and unavoidable - they can be minimised but never expunged from the swell of our lives (see **Personal Revolutions #106: Motivation / Fear**).

If we attempt to escape from them, or sweep them under the carpet, we are attempting the impossible, which is to try and hide from reality. Though we may be able to create control structures or systems that keep reality's chaos at bay for a short while, on a long enough timeline it will eventually sneak through the cracks in whatever we have built

to keep it out and surprise us with its blessings. This is just the way things are and the best that we can hope to do is to be able to manage things for the better. If we can't get rid of it, we might as well reframe how we work with it.

***As it says in Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness, the three options are always the same: change it, leave it, or learn to live with it.***

Dialogue circumvents some of these problems by accepting them as the fundamental assumptions on which it stands. It acknowledges that human beings are human beings and so allows them to communicate in the most human way.

Instead of denying the fact that problems and conflict will arise, and that when they do these things can always be solved, dialogue doesn't even try; instead, it attempts to turn these things into learning opportunities, so that something new might emerge, or that, at the very least, those involved in the dialogue will learn something new and ideally be able to gain insight, as the conflict of opposing views sharpens the tools that they already carry within their toolbox.

Real communication is also about understanding that human beings have emotions, that they are not perfectly rational or intellectual creatures all of the time, and that the emotions and sensations dragged up by conflict and disagreement play an important role in the way that this conflict and disagreement is handled.

Dialogue also comes from the assumption and understanding that, due to the limitations of perception, and the limitations of the representations that we use to make 'sense' of these perceptions, most, if not all, thought is incomplete and out-of-sync with reality itself. So why waste time attempting to fool ourselves or others that we have a total grasp of the 'Truth'? Perception is always limited and thoughts about perception are always incomplete. Humans gonna human; embrace it and work with it.

Accepting these conditions of humanity and reality, dialogue puts us in better alignment with both than traditional 'debate-based' methods of communication might do. When we accept these things about ourselves and the world, we have to accept certain things about our points of view: mainly that whatever we have concocted is only a set of

interpretations and that it is only, as its name suggests, a ‘point of view’, not the whole of the view in itself.

When we come from this stance of uncertainty and acceptance of imperfection, we are better able to meet others where they are at and to truly ‘listen’ to what they have to say without feeling a need to ‘fix’ their view so that it is in alignment with our own (see **Personal Revolutions #49: Imperfect / Perfect**).

Instead, we are able to let go of the need to control things and to observe them as they are, less threatened by the unknown because we have made friends with it. We also learn to understand that any attempt at ‘fixing’ usually stems from fear of some kind and an irrational attachment to some idea of the truth. Once in this mind-set, we no longer need to ‘fix’ others, or feel threatened by those who attempt to fix us; we simply meet everybody wherever they are and accept what they have to offer as a gift that may help us to polish the diamond of our own internal insight.

**Dialogue can open you to yourself and the world because it shows you that the main blockage to these things is yourself in the form of the ego.**

The main source of deception in your life is the way that you think, especially the way that you think about your thoughts. This is especially true if, to paraphrase David Bohm, we think that our thoughts are something that simply ‘report’ on reality, and that the information delivered to our conscious minds by thought is something that automatically serves to give an objective account of who we are and the world around us.

This book is ultimately a discussion about many of the ‘problems’ with thought as it operates by default, such as this tendency to participate in our reality whilst telling us that it only reports, as well as its tendency to fragment ourselves and the world into illusory conceptual barriers that it then treats as reality itself.

On another level, thought allows another ‘problem’ to emerge when these two facets come together; it makes us believe in limits that are not actually there, and then skirt around them, or live within their sphere of influence, because we fear what might happen if we try to transgress them.

At its simplest, thought can be said to be a device that allows us to make sense of the world so that we can feel a sense of comfort in the control that we project upon the world. Though the universe itself may be fundamentally chaotic, our brains allow us to look around us and to ‘create’ patterns, or narratives, that explain what is happening in a way that makes enough sense for us not to panic in the overwhelming vastness of the universe despite the littleness of ourselves. Rejoice!

Though none of us can know ‘everything’, we often know just enough to explain away our fears about ourselves and the world and to justify however we ended up where we currently happen to be. The problem is that we can become addicted to the comfort that these ‘thoughts’, in the form of patterns, or narratives, bring - to such an extent that, when these beliefs are threatened, we respond emotionally, because the removal of our illusions is usually a revelation of our unresolved ‘shame’.

*Depending on how attached we are to the ego, via our points of view, the attacks that are thrown at them are comparable to our whole universe being attacked. In other words, the more afraid we are of ourselves and the world, the more addicted we will become to our points of view and the illusion of control that comes with them.*

What we are really afraid of in these cases is uncertainty and the capacity of ourselves to be able to deal with the unknown or unexpected when it arises. People who are afraid of uncertainty are, more often than not, really convinced of their own powerlessness and so they attempt to control things in order to escape these feelings. Unfortunately for them, the world itself and especially the other human beings in it, are unpredictable and so attempting to control them completely will be an ultimately futile and frustrating exercise.

Unless these people can find more power within themselves and shift to dancing with the world, instead of trying to have it dance to the ego's tune, they will become increasingly frustrated and more attached to the view that they want to be 'true'.

Most points of view have more to do with keeping the ego in place than they do 'reality'; by helping us to switch to a stance of uncertainty, dialogue opens us to ourselves and the world so that we can be stronger within both, avoiding the problems that come with attempting to control a beast that can never be tamed but which can be befriended (see **Personal Revolutions #10: Uncertainty / Certainty**).

**Dialogue can help you to break free  
of the cycle of thoughts affecting  
perceptions and perceptions  
affecting thoughts. It can help you to  
live and see more clearly.**

Life can be pretty brutal; our bodies will age, our minds will fade, and everything essentially feeds off of everything else. In the physical **World of Necessity**, there is a constant battle unfolding for the dominance of will and assertion of rights to time, property, and resources. In the abstract **World of Symbols**, there is a constant battle unfolding for the dominance of one 'Truth' over another, of clamours for status, and of skirmishes for ego-strokes of appreciation, approval, and acceptance.

It's inexorable and unending; as long as we're here, breathing and striving and taking part in the great blossoming of all human drama and interactions, we will be dragged into the ring and forced to play the game whether we like it or not.

But it's not all as bleak as it may seem: to work with life and live it on its own terms allows us to build something wonderful if we dedicate ourselves to purposeful, self-directed action. But before we can build, we have to be able to understand the tools that are at our disposal, as well as the materials that we have to build with.

This is really a simple matter of 'logic': if we increase our awareness of ourselves, our worlds, and the conditions and capacities of both, we will be more likely to work with them in a way that produces effective results, because we are building with reality, instead of against it.

This may mean that we initially have to face some uncomfortable truths about ourselves and reality, but once we are able to see and accept these things for what they are - no longer causing unnecessary friction through denial - we are able to live harmoniously and on a foundation of strength that will support us for the rest of our short, miserable lives (haha).

Dialogue is the key to uncovering life on its own terms because it is a form of communication built around the most fundamental value of them all: 'Truth' – importantly the truth about dialogue itself and its own limitations. This is in comparison to the more commonly utilised medium of 'debate', often used in the service of the value of an agenda or point of view which it is being used to defend.

This culture of debate may have set out with the best of intentions, but it has devolved into a tool designed to allow people to speciously defend points of view and agendas, regardless of the veracity or depth of 'Truth' contained within them (example: mainstream media – where the more polarising our points of view, the more likely we are to be given a gig as a 'talking head').

This 'problem' with debate is demonstrated in the understanding that to 'win' one you don't have to be 'right', you just have to come up with the most highly-constructed narrative, or interpretation, of whatever happens to be under discussion.

This book is about the way in which dialogue can ‘free’ you of the limitations that you inflict upon yourself and the world through your thoughts and ideas. A consequence of moving in this direction is that we come to acknowledge that, due to the limits of our understanding, much, if not most, of the knowledge that we use to make sense of the world is incoherent and limited.

On a deeper level, this way of thinking teaches us to understand that our perceptions are limited too, with our limited thoughts affecting our limited perceptions and our limited perceptions affecting our thoughts. The cycle is endless and you’re right in the middle of it.

Though dialogue may not be able to completely help us break out of this cycle, it can at least help us to realise that it is there, so that we can build a realistic set of assumptions to start from about how things are. Human beings don’t have all the answers, but that they can find more of them if they stop trying to convince themselves that they already possess them.

Sometimes, the only way to start seeing clearly is to unlearn some of the ideas about what you are already expecting to see. Dialogue facilitates this process, moving everybody involved closer towards reality, so that they can better build with and upon it – the best thing that we can do for both ourselves and the world around us.

**Dialogue brings human beings together because it shows that all conflict only exists at the level of interpretation, not reality, and that the main source of disagreement between human beings stems from simply not knowing each other.**

Human beings have more similarities than differences and, perhaps for this very reason, tend to get caught up in the differences that they note between themselves and others, eventually exacerbating or blowing them out of all proportion.

Perhaps the obvious explanation for this, the kind that would be thrown out in classes on cocktail psychology, or in other schools of sublunary wisdom, is the idea that we fear what we don't know, and so become hostile in the face of physical or symbolic differences between us and other people that are outside of the bubbles of control that we have built for ourselves.

As has been discussed already in this book, human beings have a natural inclination to protect what they already *think* they know, because this knowledge base offers a sense of security and comfort in the face of a chaotic and uncaring universe.

Though it may look like people are defending mere opinions, on a deeper level, they are actually attempting to protect their sense of stability in both their own identities and their worlds. It's no wonder people take this stuff so seriously and that a shortcut to making so many of us lose our wits is simply tell us that we're 'wrong'; the ego is threatened by anything that asks it to change and reality won't just ask us to change, it will make us.

Human beings are human and humans gonna human. The problem is that much of the ‘difference’ that we allow ourselves to perceive between each other is something that exists mainly in our heads in the form of the conceptual interpretations and ideas of a fragmented duality.

On the necessary level of our biology and the typical path that the average human life will unfold over, we are essentially the same. We all have certain needs, for example, such as the physical cravings for oxygen or sustenance, or even the higher level needs such as a desire to find purpose and to live significantly, or heroically, in the service of some higher purpose (see **Personal Revolutions #56: Self-Transcendence / Self**).

On another level, we all tend to go through the same rites of passage, albeit at different times, or in different ways; we are all thrown into the clutches of the earth from the womb; we all realise our basic sense of separation from the world around us, try to become reconnected, and then eventually die to leave behind whatever we may have managed to muster together in our time here.

This is the basic skeleton of the ‘average’ human life: to be born with a certain set of biological needs within a **World of Symbols** that help us come to terms with our own inevitable demise and the transitory ebb and flow of all that surrounds us. We are born to dream but usually die made real.

Many of the ‘differences’ between us are symbolic and are often based on representations that we carry in our heads about how things ‘are’ or ‘should’ be. They are assumptions and expectations about what human beings are, the facts of their experience, and the goals, methods, and values, that ‘should’ be honoured during our time here (to paraphrase Peter Senge in his book *The 5<sup>th</sup> Discipline*). When we look at the differences between one culture and another, we are really looking at the symbols that they use to interpret and make sense of the human condition and the reality that it unfolds within.

This is one of the reasons why, when you strip them down to the basics, many religions are saying the same thing in a different way, or why the mystics or the quantum physicists or whoever else, eventually break things down to the metaphysical realm and connect us to the ‘Truth’ through that: All symbols embellish the same ‘Truth’ from different vantage points, they are simply collective interpretations of the human experience that have worked in one geographic location and been used to unite the people that live there. Individuals have opinions; cultures have symbols.

Dialogue shows us that, more often than not, when we fear human beings from a different culture to our own, we really stand in awe of the symbols and interpretations that they use to make sense of their reality. Ideally, the dialogue process allows us to clear this web of alien symbols and ideas out of the way, so that we can shine light on the human similarities that exist between us and those that are making use of them.

***You can only question somebody or something that you don't know, and dialogue presents you with an opportunity to go through the process of asking the questions necessary of unknown others to get to the stage where 'knowing' is possible and questions are less, or even no longer, necessary.***

Dialogue brings people and cultures together, not because it is ‘magic’, but because it gives them the opportunity to get to know each other and to realise that, at the most basic of levels, beyond the veil of arbitrary symbols, assumptions, and expectations, human beings are human beings and that the only thing that really puts any distance between them, even more so than physical space, is the ideas that they carry.

**The ‘Final Theory of Everything ®’ will be silence and the more we know each other, the more closely we move towards understanding it.**

# **Dialogue shows that our mental well-being is often linked to the relationship that we cultivate with our own belief systems.**

Human beings live out their lives in the amorphous communal spaces that exist somewhere between the ideas in their heads and the reality of whatever these ideas are actually about.

Each human life is the bridge between the **World of Necessity**, briefly defined as the world 'as it is', reducible to matter or biology, and the **World of Symbols**, which can briefly be defined as the conceptual or ideological constructions that human beings use to interpret, mythologise, and heighten our experience of themselves and the world.

Though each human being inhabits both of these worlds at any given moment, bridging them in the **World of Relationships**, the nature of our thought processes and our tendency to attach ourselves to our opinions and ideas - treating them as something that we ARE, not merely something that we HAVE - can lead us to confuse the **World of Symbols** for the **World of Necessity**.

All symbols and concepts are signposts to reality, some are more real than others, but none are completely real in themselves – for this reason, it is easy to get lost in symbols that feel good in the short-term, but have no connection to reality overall. This may allow us to swim through life quite comfortably for a time, but as soon as reality sneaks up on us, shattering the illusions of the purely symbolic, we will most likely find ourselves drowning in the disappointment of been shown the futility of our ideals.

Misery is brought into our lives when our illusions are shattered and we fight fruitlessly to cling onto them; this is why much of the content within this book, and in **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, promotes an attitude of awareness and acceptance: if you start to build with the real then you will be less likely to watch your illusions crumble. Dialogue shows us that this is one of the keys to mental equanimity and well-being.

Reality is always found in the same place: inside you, somewhere in the gap between expectation and result. For example, we may grow up **expecting** perfect 'True Love', only to be greeted with the result of a real human relationship, with its rough edges and its drama and its imperfections; depending on the severity of the gulf between the expectation and the result, our disappointment will either be something that we can work with or something that crushes us completely.

Another example: we may grow up expecting some of the symbolic ideals that we have cultivated within our minds to exist in the real world; perfect equality, perfect justice, perfect fairness, or any of the other ideals that we are driven towards realising in our perfectly imperfect human way. Depending on how attached we are to these expectations, we will be more or less disappointed when the world as it is doesn't align with them and we are asked to build upon something real instead.

It is what it is and communicating with reality can help us to break out of this automatic cycle of expectation and result by teaching us that these expectations are only mental constructs based on our best understanding of the past, as well as the demands of our insecurities and intentions filtered through the fear, pride, and desire of the ego.

On a higher level, dialogue allows us to understand that if our expectations are something that we HAVE, not ARE, and if this also applies to other conceptual tools such as our opinions, assumptions, thought patterns, and even sub-personalities and personality as a whole, we are able to detach from these things, to release our hold, and to give them to the flow of the gap between necessity and symbolism, in the **World of Relationships**, instead of attempting to control these things or project agendas onto them.

This frees us to dance with the music that is actually playing, not just the tune that we can hear in our head alone. This is why dialogue can help us to put the ego in the backseat and let whatever is real about us drive us forwards (the whole point of **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**).

What does this have to do with our mental well-being?

Most of the friction in our lives is caused by our tendency to resist what is real.

It comes from our tendency to deny our own nature and instead to try and live according to the dictates of the self-concept and world-concept that our neurotic 'idealised self', or ego, asks us to live in conformity with.

Though it is quite natural for each of us to have a mental ideal of how things could be, if we attach ourselves too vehemently to this, and become absolutist about its veracity and gravitas, we eventually slip out-of-sync with ourselves and the world as they are - the end result being that the ideas that we have created to protect ourselves eventually serve to destroy us or, at the very least, make us miserable.

The short-version: If the world and reality are in a constant state of flux, and we are a part of that reality, it is harmful to cling to a concept of ourselves or the world as though static. Dialogue teaches us not just to expect change but also to BE change, of both the world and ourselves, and to work with this change in a way that releases us from mental friction, putting us in the swing of both ourselves and the world in which we unfold (see **Personal Revolution #12: Flux / Stasis**)..

**Dialogue teaches us to move with reality, not against it, a natural consequence of which is a state of equanimity that allows us to face ourselves and the world on their own terms as we grow into our own realness.**

**Dialogue shows us that, more often than not, we aren't actually 'thinking', but showing off what we've already thought or been told to think.**

Most people can tell you their opinions but not always the reasons behind these opinions. They might be able to tell you what they think about the existence of God, the state of the economy, or the latest global crisis regarding environmental issues, but, more often than not, the depth of understanding here is superficial because these opinions

have been acquired via external sources such as the mass media or other 'authorities'.

An uncomfortable 'truth' about the human condition is that human beings are capable of tricking themselves into thinking that they believe certain things and then acting in accordance with these deceptive beliefs as they make their ways through life. Dialogue gives these poor creatures the opportunity to offer their beliefs and opinions up for scrutiny so that chains of reasoning can be uncovered and thinkers can distinguish between what they were told to think and what they actually do (see **Personal Revolutions #65: Your Decisions / Cultural Decisions**).

A related distinction here, made by David Bohm in 'Thought as a System', is that between thinking and thought. Quite often, we believe ourselves to be 'thinking' in the moment about whatever stimuli are presented to us, but we are actually acting automatically and retrieving the thoughts that we already thought; we project our memories onto the present.

Though there may often be a great deal of overlap between the information that we have retrieved from memory and the situation in front of us, there will always be a gap between the two, and, if we try to constantly project the past upon it, this can hinder our movement towards the truth of what is 'real' in the present.

*There is an important distinction to be made between the concrete ideas that we carry in our heads and the context of the world in front of us (see **Personal Revolutions #69: Context / Concrete**).*

When we enter a dialogue circle, we are given an opportunity to try and move away from autopilot and to learn from the present and our real potential within it. This may be uncomfortable as we try to let go of the heuristics, theories, or ideas that we normally carry into a situation, but as we learn to be comfortable with the uncertainty of growing into the internal insight that this process offers us, we are able to become more familiar with the 'Truth' of our own experience, seeing that the only real reasons that we need to know are the ones that stand inside of us.

Dialogue is about peeling the layers of the onion until we are left with what is most irrefutable about our understanding and experience. It gives us an opportunity to let go of the conceptual 'knowledge' that

distracts us from what actually stands in front of us, and which changes over time, and to try and tune into to the instinctual, intellectual, and intuitive knowing that is less fragmented and more consistent over time. The truth isn't a destination, but a direction to move in, and real communication helps us move there.

## **Dialogue shows us that one of the most efficient social strategies is to be open to the idea of being 'wrong'.**

In general, the more stubborn we are, the more miserable we eventually become. How do we account for this in relation to what we have said over and over again already in this book? Because stubbornness can be seen as an extreme attachment to our perceptions, or our interpretations, about the world and ourselves within it.

This brand of stubbornness is essentially an extreme clinging to a particular vision of reality and an emotional desire to hold onto it, regardless of the continual bombardment of conflicting information from reality itself; usually, because it is easier to keep fighting the encroachment of this new data than it is to face some uncomfortable truth about ourselves or the world.

Stubbornness is a form of delusion that arises because our brain in the service of the ego would rather keep us in a state of ignorance than to push through the pain of growing into coherence with reality. But, as with so many things in life and reality, sometimes short-term pain is the only way to find long-term fulfilment (see **Personal Revolutions #145: Edge / Centre**).

In general, we can be 'stubborn' about two things: 1) Our opinions, expectations, and assumptions about ourselves and the world – the interpretations that we have made about the data that the world has already presented to us, 2) The desired self-image that fuels our ego and acts as a feedback loop between ourselves and reality that we operate from when we speak to others – essentially an idealistic interpretation about who we think we are, how we should be treated, and where we have been, currently are, and might be going.

This isn't to say that these things in themselves are harmful or 'wrong', only that the intensity to which we cling to them, and the amount of time that we cling to them for, in the face of contrary information or ideas, can cause a wider gulf to emerge between the absolute that we want to be true of ourselves and the world and the effects of a reality constantly in flux.

***If the world continues to change and we don't acknowledge it, we will either have to become even more stubborn and myopic, or to have our illusions dramatically shattered and forced to rebuild from the ground up.***

Dialogue can loosen us up by having us embrace the fact that human beings, including ourselves, are consistently 'wrong' about things and usually, if not always, incoherent in their beliefs about what is real.

If we can learn to let go, or to at least dance with the world as it unfolds, and to embrace the concepts that we carry of ourselves and the world as being fluid instead of static, we will more likely be able to shift towards coherent beliefs when we are asked by reality to do so.

This appreciation of our own tendency to be wrong or incoherent also frees us to have better relationships with others because we are less conflicted when the ideas that they carry of us are out-of-sync with the ideas that we expect them to have. Like any other instance of aligning ourselves with reality, it removes unnecessary friction and dissonance from our lives.

Dialogue allows us, in these terms, to take things less personally and to acknowledge that we cannot simply go out into the world and define ourselves, but have to go out into the world and create and recreate what we think we are as we melt into reality and reality melts into us. It shows us that we are all interdependent in reality, including the ideas and labels we use to describe ourselves and the world (see **Personal Revolutions #27: You Think / They Think**).

# **Dialogue can help us to have better relationships with ourselves, others, and the world because it asks us to make friends with uncertainty.**

From the limited vantage point of human perception and understanding, the world is always at least slightly out of reach. We have spoken much about this already, be it the limits of our perception and the influence that this has on our thoughts, or the limitations of our thoughts and the influence that this has on perception.

'Freedom' comes when we learn to liberate ourselves from the cycle of confusing these limits for the end of our world, and learning to realise that, as human beings in human systems, we are all interdependent variables of the overall whole, not mere fragments.

If we wish to make any attempt at acquiring a more complete understanding of these systems, then we are better off using the knowledge that we *think* we possess to serve the knowledge of others and the creative process of collaboration, by offering our own 'truth' up for scrutiny, instead of only ever using it to assert ourselves and our interpretations.

What exactly does this mean? It means that no individual human being can, or ever will, have a total grasp of the 'Truth' – some may be able to point others in a clearer direction than others, but due to the limitations of our biological and cognitive faculties, as well as the simple fact that we are always rooted to our own limited position in time and space, there will always be a time when, if we want to get a better grasp of what is 'real', we have to reach out to others, or at the very least see ourselves as being connected to them.

This is what dialogue provides us with an opportunity to do: share our uncertainties with others in the hope of building something more real.

This kind of real communication can improve our relationships with ourselves, others, and the world by helping us to develop a familiarity with uncertainty that allows us to stop trying to control people and the world, or expect things of them, and to simply meet them where they are before we decide what to do together.

This doesn't mean that we behave passively or allow the world to walk all over us, as surrendering to the world completely could only lead to destruction; it simply means that we meet each moment with as much awareness as possible, so that we can work with the reality of what stands in front of us, not what our illusions have convinced us to actually see; to be able to work with the uncertainty that reality presents to us from one moment to the next, we have to first cultivate a relationship with ourselves that allows us to stand strong in the face of whatever happens (within reason) as time ploughs onwards.

To improve relationships with world around us and the people that inhabit it we first need to cultivate a better relationship with ourselves. In the terms used throughout this book, this means that we work on shifting our 'inner monologue' from a reactive, debate-based way of speaking to ourselves to a creative, dialogue-based one – in other words, putting what **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness** calls the 'ego' in the backseat.

This means that we look at the 'weather' of our inner experience without judgement, or expectation, and with a sense of playful curiosity and exploration. It means that we do not take the thoughts or patterns that are presented to us as a given, but are open to questioning them. Even within ourselves.

Once we have learned to see ourselves in this way we will be better positioned to see others and the world in the same light and to create with the information presented to us, instead of only ever reacting to it. We will be able to flow with reality and the 'meaning' that it presents to us, instead of against it.

When we are 'happy' within ourselves we tend to treat other people better. Dialogue can help us to let go of many of the things that can make us 'unhappy', such as the social programming or biological dictates that cause us to try and live our lives according to external ideas and assumptions at the expense of following our own path.

Once we are in this process, becoming increasingly confident within ourselves, we are less likely to try and control others because we are more confident in our ability to be able to deal with the unpredictable or uncertain – ‘other people’ often being the most unpredictable and uncertain of all.

Instead of placing unnecessary barriers between ourselves and the rest of the world because we are afraid of these things, we can find a foundation of realness within ourselves and allow things to unfold on their own terms and create with them as they actually are.

**The world begins and ends with you so the best place to start looking for it is within yourself.**

## **Dialogue teaches us to think in terms of spectra and continua because everything contains the seeds of its opposite.**

Dialogue helps us to increase the coherency of our thoughts, ideas, and understanding by encouraging us to align the way in which we think more closely to reality. This means that we don’t just pay attention to the content, or **WHAT**, of our thought process, but also the **HOW**, and the impact that the way in which we think affects our perceptions and knowledge of ourselves and the world around us.

Though the logic and semantics of the way in which we construct our arguments and interpretations are obviously important, the ways in which we choose to present this information, and the things that we decide to do with it, often carry more weight in the dialogue process and the influence or effect that we will have on ourselves and others.

***What does this mean to ‘think in alignment with reality’? And is it even possible? It means that we acknowledge that our knowledge is always limited, that we have a tendency to fragment and tear things apart, instead of to build and create, and that reality is ever-changing, despite the concepts that we carry in our heads being tuned into the illusions of permanence and concreteness.***

Every moment in dialogue, as in life, presents us with the opportunity to move either towards wholeness or towards fragmentation. The choices that we make about how to present our ideas will lead us in either one of these directions; this is why a major premise of this book, and the philosophy presented in **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, is the idea that social progress is essentially about relationships and relationships are about the way that we communicate with each other. As dramatic as may sound, dialogue is the engine of social progress, and we are its fuel.

Part of moving towards this ‘Wholeness’ means, among other things, acknowledging the gap between the black and white, either/or proclivities of our natural thought processes and the ever-flowing web of spectra and continuums that comprise reality ‘out there’.

When we attach ourselves to our thoughts, as they reach us by default, we can confuse the veil of concepts that we project over reality for reality itself, thus getting lost in the ego. Though this helps us to function in the world and to make enough sense to guide ourselves through its spaces, it can also lead to us living out illusion if we don’t acknowledge that we are living on the basis of interpretations, not facts (see **Personal Revolutions #52: Wholeness / Fragmentation**).

The concrete or absolutist nature of our thoughts tells us that things are ‘good’ or ‘bad’, that events were ‘successes’ or ‘failures’, or that we are ‘happy’ or ‘depressed’; dialogue, in comparison, awakens us to the reality that everything contains the seed of its opposite.

There can be no ‘good’ without ‘bad’, no ‘success’ without ‘failure’, ‘happiness’ without ‘depression’, or whatever else, because all of these things are different steps along the same continuum. When we learn to think in these terms, a door is opened to better understanding of ourselves, the world, and the other people that inhabit it (see **10 Keys to Dialogue #8** in this book).

If we are lucky, we realise that the ‘truth’ about each of us is that we are all light and dark and that the light can only shine because of the darkness; through this, we learn to become more compassionate and forgiving; then, we learn to see that all of us are stations on the same radio dial, albeit tuned into different frequencies.

By showing us a doorway to the world outside of the concepts that we carry about it, dialogue breaks us out of the constraints of a world in black and white and allows us to colour in between the lines.

**Learn to think in terms of spectrums and continuums; let go of absolute rights and wrongs; make the shift to thinking in terms of probabilities, and watch as the world starts to work with you on its own terms as you grow into it on yours.**

## **Dialogue teaches us to learn how to master our mind instead of having it only ever master us.**

The creative mind is perhaps the greatest tool that human beings have available to them, but such is the extent of its power that it is easy to lapse into treating this tool as something that controls us, instead of merely being something that we use to have more control over the world.

Dialogue helps us to gain mastery of our minds by bringing our attention to the way in which we think and the tendency that we have, unless we are actively mindful, to attach ourselves to the stream of thoughts, sensations, and emotions that flow past in the river of our consciousness.

The process encourages us to take a more active approach to thought and thinking by becoming self-directed and consciously choosing to concentrate on the jetsam that flows through our experience, explicitly focusing on the mental content that is important to who we are in our realness, our values, and our mission or purpose in the world (see **Personal Revolutions #125: Mental Partner / Mental Master**).

***Whatever arises within us that is irrelevant to the reality at hand or a distraction from the present moment is allowed to melt away and leave us in relative equanimity.***

There is a strong link between dialogue as a communication method, or any other creative endeavor, and the skills or qualities that are often cultivated as a natural consequence of regular meditation; dialogue encourages us to be aware of what is going on inside of us and to create with it instead of only ever reacting to it; it asks us to transmute the human energies that flow through us into something constructive, and to be aware of the tapestry of meaning that changes and unfolds between those involved in the creation of the dialogue.

Dialogue asks us to increase our awareness, not just of ourselves and the information that emerges from moment to moment inside of ourselves, but also within the environment around us and reality as a whole. This can only really be achieved when we learn to step back from the chatter of our thoughts and to realise that there is an important distinction between observers and the observed, between the consistency of the 'I' and the ever-changing weather of the 'Me', and the abstract concepts and ideas that we confuse for our realness in the form of its direct opposite: the ego.

Silence is already whole; our words can only serve to fragment it. This doesn't mean that dialogue is necessarily about connecting to any 'higher power' or the loftier realms of consciousness, but it does mean that the practice of dialogue is an opportunity for us to release ourselves from the noise that pollutes our mental lives and to re-identify with whoever or whatever it is that we are in the silence of each real moment.

***Dialogue teaches us that there is purpose in wholeness, that we are all interdependent within whatever this wholeness is, and that we are free to reconnect to it from moment to moment, if we are able to gain control of our minds instead of having our minds control us.***

When we start to cultivate these skills and qualities we realise that much of the ‘debate-based’ communication that takes place in the world is simply the reactions to the reactions transpiring from one brain to another; an instance of slaves fighting slaves. Dialogue allows us to stop reacting and start creating; perhaps even choosing to use our minds to serve something ‘higher’, be it humanity, a charity, our values, or whatever else, and to make the most of the greatest tool available to us as we make the most of our realness.

## **Dialogue leads to a more authentic ‘Truth’ by bringing whole humans into the equation, not just their fragmented shards.**

Dialogue is a real way of communicating that acknowledges the complexity of human beings as living systems within systems and the relation of this complexity to the ‘Truth’ (whatever the hell that might be). It is an authentic way of exploring ourselves and the world that examines whatever data is available, not just the snippets that are within the grasp of conceptual understanding, or within the objectively measurable externalities of the surface-level world.

What does this mean? In the simplest possible terms, it means that there is more to life and human experience than the conceptual, or fragmentary, intellect.

Each one of us is a cocktail of instinct and intellect, intuition and imagination; an amalgam of emotions and bodily states, and sensations. Everybody you speak to is a product of their own life experience, the past that they have carried into the present with them, and the anxieties, goals, and ambitions that they carry regarding the future. And, any time you interact with another human being, you’re imbibing this cocktail too.

As we have said, the incessant cycle of perceptions affecting thought, and thoughts affecting perceptions, means that there is a veil between

'reality' as it stands in itself, and the **World of Symbols** that each human being carries within their heads until the day that they die.

There are seven billion of us on the planet which means that there are seven billion different worlds unfolding from moment to moment. This doesn't mean that we need to panic and that we're all forever alone at sea, sinking in our solipsistic shipwrecks, but it does mean that before we can learn to improve our relationships regarding the way that we view and interact within 'Consensus Reality', we need to rearrange some of the internal furniture that we carry within ourselves as individuals that prevents us from looking out the window of our experience with as much clarity as possible.

We have already discussed the idea that the most effective way to be able to engage in dialogue with others is to first be able to engage in dialogue with ourselves (this is the major premise of **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**). What we are really talking about here is uncovering a more authentic 'Truth' by exploring it in a more authentic way; when we have created containers for honest exploration (aka 'dialogue circles') we create an opportunity for individuals to offer their views honestly and openly in the service of the 'Truth' and the 'Truth' alone.

This may be a subtle shift, but compared to debate and its foundational assumption that the purpose of entering the arena is to be either 'right' or 'wrong', dialogue frees us from the constraints of this imposed ego-structure to remove the conceptual layers and barriers that stand between ourselves and reality instead of boxing ourselves within them but telling ourselves we are free.

Debate really only focuses on one 'part' of the human animal: the conceptual intellect (more often than not in the service of the ego, over the 'truth').

It focuses on 'rights' and 'wrongs' and gets caught up in chasing the meaning of words and semantic displays of sophistry and sleight of hand, but, because it is only focused on concepts, ideas and symbols, not real creativity, it eventually turns into a ricochet of self-reflexivity; if we keep it up we eventually find ourselves in a state where we are building ideas onto ideas, concepts onto concepts, but only ever dealing with the veil, not the face left gasping for air behind it.

***Dialogue doesn't remove the veil completely, but it at least acknowledges that it's there and allows us to glimpse behind it every once in a while.***

How does dialogue in the 'real' way described in this book help us to do this? By looking at human beings as systems and acknowledging that the fragments that we perceive are, as with all fragments, a product of the mind alone; boundaries that we have drawn to help us make sense and build upon the world.

'Thought' isn't just a mental process but something that is affected by all the 'parts' of the human system, the instincts and the emotions, or whatever else we may have mentioned already in this book.

When we acknowledge this, we don't enter a dialogue and forget about these things so that we can rationalise or explain situations and circumstances away in concepts alone; instead we acknowledge that anything that contributes to our experience of life filters our experience of life; and, if we want to experience, or comprehend, more of the truth, we have to explore each of the parts of ourselves that have roots attached to it.

**Dialogue allows us to uncover more authentic truths because it allows us to explore it in our own realness, not only as the socially acceptable, or symbolically confused, side of ourselves.**

## **Dialogue shows us where we have room to grow.**

Human beings lost to the ego have an innate fear of change and therefore also often have a fear of 'growing'. Assuming that we don't resist and cause undue friction in our lives, to deal with external change means to eventually grow through it, and this usually involves the pain of letting go of what we thought we knew about ourselves and the world.

When reality clashes with the expectations that we've been carrying about who we are, what the world is, and what is or isn't possible for both, we are asked to let go of the illusions that we were carrying and to build something more harmonious with the new information and experience that has become available to us.

Growing real is a long-term project that adds great value and contentment to our lives, but the emotional battle of letting go and rebuilding ourselves may be painful in the short-term, depending on how attached we are to the parts of ourselves that are 'broken' in the fall (**Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness** is about speeding up the process).

The unfortunate 'truth' about life on earth is that we will all fall at some stage. The real question turns on how we fall and how ready we are to stand again and face whatever will be thrown at us next. In a reality that is in constant flux, we are going to change whether we like it or not, and though we can't always control the direction that this change may carry us in, we can at least influence our own responses to it and guide ourselves within the parameters of our core values and higher human qualities.

Dialogue is a way of communicating that allows human beings to become comfortable with this growth process, because it provides them with a container for exposing themselves and their views to the uncomfortable truths about the world, but to transmute this conflict and discomfort into a learning opportunity to grow through, instead of only something to be dealt with or fought against.

If a human being is scared of growing real, because they are too attached to the illusions of the ego, they will be scared of dialogue and constantly turn to a stance of debate. Whereas dialogue is about accepting reality and possibly cultivating inner insight and lasting change on account of the lessons that it provides, debate is an often an all-too-futile attempt to rearrange the external world so that we can avoid the pain of having to make the inner changes necessary to live in harmony with ourselves and the world as they actually stand.

Dialogue is founded on the assumption that eventually we will have to surrender to the inevitabilities about life; the fact that we are only here for a limited amount of time, for example, or that conflict and discomfort are an inescapable part of the human experience, or that we have egos and fears and pride that will never be abated completely.

Perhaps most importantly, dialogue helps us to understand that we cannot control our reality, because all control is an illusion; the best that we can hope for is to influence our experience of the world and who we are within it – and the greatest leverage point we have here is

always ourselves (see **Personal Revolutions #128: Influence Reality / Create Reality**).

Whether we like it or not, we will all be called to change as our lives unfold. The world is a place where everything feeds off of everything else and where problem after problem will be followed by trial after trial. If we only ever argue against this, trying to explain away, or rationalise out of the picture, the things that we don't like about the human condition, we will only serve to create more friction between ourselves and the world and to make the growth process more painful than it needs to be.

*Human beings have evolved in a world filled with suffering, which means that humanity has evolved to be able to suffer when necessary; if that wasn't true then our species wouldn't have been around for as long as it has. If the environment asks for us to suffer then we must be able to in order to survive it.*

When we run away from the pain that we feel when our views are challenged, we are running away from the opportunity to grow through that pain into realness.

All 'suffering' really is in many cases is a signifier of where we still have room for growth by ridding ourselves of fragmentation that places friction between ourselves and reality; dialogue gives us the opportunity to explore ourselves and our understanding, uncovering these pain points, growing through the discomfort and frustration, to eventually find the strongest version of ourselves, aligned with reality as it actually stands and the gifts it brings in the moment.

# **Dialogue shows us that ‘tolerance’ is always a compromise and that acceptance is a preferable solution.**

As we have said already, the default mode of communication within our social systems and societies is ‘debate’. Though this has allowed us to come a long way in many respects, it has also led towards stagnation and discontent in many others because the whole purpose of debate is to reach some kind of ‘conclusion’ about ‘facts’, when in an ever fluid reality none of these things ever really exist for very long at all.

*If we believe that we have found absolute, or unchanging, ‘facts’, in the form of our opinions about the world, attaching ourselves to them and living our lives in accordance with their dictates, we will eventually find ourselves living out-of-sync with reality.*

All concepts are shadows in the face of whatever light they try to encompass, and the simple ‘Truth’ (or whatever) is this: reality is constantly changing and bringing new information to light and so any time we cling to concepts, always formed in the past, the gulf between the symbols that we carry in our head and the necessity of reality itself widens tenfold. If we see our conclusions as the end of the line, then we eventually miss out on reality as it stands; it’s just the way it is.

This problem with the way that we think about the world is shown quite clearly in the whole idea of ‘Tolerance’, which many of us are taught to see as a virtue and many more of us pride ourselves on.

Now, before we dive more deeply into this, I’m not to suggest that tolerance is an inherently ‘bad’ thing, or that it doesn’t offer social value as a temporary solution to difficult issues, but I am going to point out that if we see tolerance as the ultimate goal, seeing it as necessary and sufficient for building the Modern Utopia, then we have our wires crossed and need to think a little harder.

*Tolerance is usually what happens when we run out of conceptual arguments, or ideas, and decide that we just have to ‘live with’ whatever it is that we’re tolerating.*

Dialogue shows us that a much ‘healthier’ thing to aim for is acceptance; the first (tolerance) being a reactive attachment to our conclusions, and acceptance a creative understanding of what we are confronted with and what is inevitable or unchangeable about it.

Acceptance doesn’t mean surrender; it simply means that we see things and ourselves as they are and then take actions to harmonise both. Tolerance is only ever a short-term solution; acceptance is the real one (see **Personal Revolutions #64: Acceptance / Surrender**).

When we reach the stage of having to ‘tolerate’ somebody’s views, we are usually already assuming that they are ‘wrong’ and we are ‘right’. Though we have already reached this conclusion about their beliefs or the goals, values, and methods, and other ‘shoulds’, that they base their lives around, we essentially allow our disagreement to remain unspoken to any real, creative extent, and so the fragmentation between ourselves and the object of our toleration is left to fester.

In this sense, ‘tolerance’ prevents growth and community cohesion between different social groups because it allows the differences between them to remain the tacit focus of our attention whilst neglecting the similarities: **Group A assumes that it has Group B figured out and vice versa and, because these assumptions are treated as reality itself, nothing significant ever really changes.**

In a way, tolerance is the art of not saying anything or trying to learn anything new from people or situations; it is bad for society, if seen as the default solution to social unity, because it prevents groups within that society from growing real together. Instead, they are left to stagnate and to grow apart.

Dialogue is a more productive approach to this default stance of tolerance because it allows different groups to look honestly and openly at their views, to discuss points of disagreement in a creative and civilised manner, and to build something meaningful on the similarities that are uncovered beneath this veneer of difference.

*Tolerance that becomes part of our social tapestry maintains fragmentation because it is conflict-avoidant; dialogue allows us to see all conflict as a learning opportunity and to confront it in a way that is real.*

Dialogue does this by acknowledging that difference isn't something to be feared, or to run away from, but something that can create enough healthy friction to light new sparks of insight and to allow social groups to look at the reality of their shared situations - instead of remaining at different sides of the bridge looking out at each other, or sometimes even burning those bridges completely.

**Only when we accept what stands in front of us can we ever hope to create with it; tolerance will always only be a reaction, whereas acceptance offers a real solution.**

## **Dialogue shows us that the ego labels experience, it doesn't experience experience.**

Dialogue shows us that 'life' is relatively simple but that, when lost in the ego, we complicate things about ourselves and the world way more than is actually required in reality. The life of a human being is built around more similarities than differences; in 'reality' the things that we each confront may come in slightly different colours, or flavours, but the basic ingredients will usually be the same.

Pain, confusion, loss, joy, clarity, accomplishment, etc. - all of these things will come to each of us, and we will all go through the same basic cycles of finding ourselves in the world, coming to terms with who we are and what we think it all means, and then unlearning all this stuff as expectations collide with reality and we are forced to rebuild something more real.

***Whatever anybody may have to say about 'life', we're all going through it, and as soon as it starts to make sense it will nearly be over.***

This is the way it is for all of us, unless we die before our dotage; the only things that really differ between us are our locations in time and space, the scenery that embellishes our lives, and the intensity and duration of the problems that we face. It's simple.

But much of this 'simplicity' really only serves to account for the externalities; the furniture that we rearrange to allow ourselves to feel

a sense of control over things, or the masks that we wear to hide the things that we don't want to feel, or the things that we bring into our lives so that we can uphold the illusion that we have chosen them, instead of surrendering to the idea that, in many respects, our lives live themselves and we refer to them as 'ours'.

On the inner realm, we still share many more similarities than we do differences, but there are many more distractions to uncovering them, because of the differences in the fragmentation that we perceive and carry around with us. This leads to us confusing the orchestra for a singular, strident instrument that stifles our awareness and removes us from life as it 'wants' to be lived. It's complicated.

Dialogue teaches us to listen properly, not only to the world around us and the other human beings that inhabit it, but also to ourselves and whatever may be taking place within from moment to moment. More importantly, dialogue teaches us to be aware of wholes, not just fragments, both of ourselves and of the world; it teaches us to understand that thought is a continuous and ever unfolding process that takes place in the effervescent interplay between interdependent variables in interdependent systems (aka 'Human Beings'™).

It shows us that, from the limited vantage point of a human lifetime, with limited perception, and limited knowledge about it, the 'Truth' (whatever the hell that is) is something that can only be moved closer towards or further away from – that it is simply a direction, never something that can be grasped in its entirety, and especially not something graspable only within the maze of concepts and ideas that our minds project upon the world in an attempt to make sense of and report upon what happens to us.

The deeper we go into dialogue, the deeper we go into reality, and the more we become of ourselves, but the less of 'ourselves' we cling onto. When we learn, for example, that our opinions are not something that we ARE but something that we HAVE (see **Keys to Dialogue#1** at the back of the book), we realise that we can detach ourselves, or at the very least, stop ourselves, from attempting to treat the fleeting elements of our lives as our own personal eternity.

*When we realise that this stands of our opinions, we learn that it also stands of any of the mental representations, or conceptualisations, of the world that we may try and cling to; and*

*as we put the ego in the backseat to our realness, we realise that our mind is just a tool in the world, not the world itself.*

Shifting to this way of thinking frees us to live our real lives, because it frees us from the limitations of concepts, both the ones that others expect us to live in alignment with, and also the disappointment that we feel when we try to have others live in alignment with ours.

*In other words? We become real because we have realistic expectations (which sometimes means no expectations at all).*

Dialogue shows us that *things are what they are*, that *we is what we is*, and that's really all there is to it. All that we can do as individuals is pick and choose how we decide to interpret things and make sense of it all.

And, when we accept that, whatever human beings are, we are wholes, we learn to accept that we are more than just the mind; not necessarily in a metaphysical or a 'magical' sense, but in the sense that the mind is the net and we and the things that we experience are its haul; if we are not careful or identify with the 'wrong' thing then we will allow ourselves to slip between the holes and miss out on a life that is as rich and as potent as it can possibly be.

When get out of our heads and into our hearts, we let go of the limits that concepts cast upon our experience, because we realise that the mind doesn't experience things, it simply labels that experience. When we see this, we open ourselves up to be able to experience much more; we see that experience is happening because we are happening and that we are always free to happen even more. Simple.

**Dialogue shows us that social progress is fundamentally about the interactions between people in the World of Relationships.**

One of the buzz phrases in this book is 'interdependent variables', usually followed by a profound sentence or two about how we are all

elements within the same system and that whenever we interact with one another we are allowing a new system to emerge.

Or, to put it in the words used in **Personal Revolutions #139: Collective Intelligence / Individual Intelligence**: *One System + One System = One System, One Mind + One Mind = One Mind.*

Really, when we talk in this book, or Personal Revolutions, about making the shift from the mechanistic, debate-based view to the sociocultural, or even creative thrivalist, dialogic view of human beings, the human condition, and humans as systems, we are talking about a shift that sees us thinking outside and beyond the limitations of our evolutionary and social programming, and learning to think and act from the level of our higher human values and understanding.

***We are talking about a real world inhabited by real human beings in real systems designed to engender this real humanity.***

To free ourselves of our 'lizard brains' (or 'ape', if you're feeling sophisticated today), we first have to develop an awareness of the limits that it places over our experience, perceptions, and knowledge and to develop the skills necessary to manage the effects of these things.

We have to learn how to respond, instead of only reacting; we have to learn how to look for the similarities, instead of only focusing on differences; we have to learn to understand that, as individuals, and even collectively, we are always incoherent in the scope and accuracy of our knowledge and, so that, if we want to acquire more coherent 'facts', we have to acknowledge that, in the **World of Symbols**, at least, all we really have are interpretations.

Essentially, to find the 'truth', we have to accept that we will probably never find it in totality, but that we can always move a step or two closer towards it if we are able to manage our egos - especially the fear, pride, and desire that cast shadows before the light of the 'truth' - and see ourselves as collaborating with others, not only asserting ourselves against them (see **Personal Revolutions #66: Collaborate / Assert**).

Dialogue, in these terms, becomes the engine of social progress, because it becomes the engine of improved relationships. Fundamentally, everything in this book, and in most other sources that

concern themselves with cultural shifts and social progress, is about improving the relationships between people by breaking the unnecessary, fragmentary boundaries that stand between them.

***Social progress is about the relationships between the interdependent variables (aka Human Beings) in the social system in question and all relationships are fundamentally about the way that we communicate.***

Dialogue is a way of communicating that is designed to improve human relationships by seeing human beings and their reality on the 'realest' possible terms; it acknowledges the transitoriness of our opinions, the durability of our values, and the importance of uncovering 'truth' in the most tactful and relational way possible.

We do not live in a world of static things, but a dynamic **World of Relationships**. Thinking of the world in terms of the objects that occupy it alone, including a view of human beings in this way, leads to the fragmentary world that we currently inhabit, where human lives are valued ultimately only as part of the machine, not as the machine itself.

When we make the shift to thinking in terms of relationships, and communicating with one another in a way that actively acknowledges this, we naturally shift into a way that sees us thinking in terms of systems and breaks down some of the unnecessary boundaries that lead to the unnecessary us/them fragmentation that perpetuates the problems we're talking about.

Instead of the '**Us/Them**' world view of debate and the ego's lizard brain, we are able to see things in terms of just '**Us**', and once we have acknowledged a platform based on similarities and unity, over differences and tribalism, we can start to build in a direction that moves us all forwards into the real world, not just our ideas about it.

# **Dialogue shows us that the main barriers to ‘Truth’ are the ego’s fear, pride, and desire.**

When we fall into the trap of thinking that the ‘Truth’ is something that can be grasped and made sense of through words or symbols alone, we find ourselves slipping into a way of seeing the world that makes us believe that the ‘Truth’ is a purely intellectual concept.

This is the way of thinking that has led to a culture and worship of ‘debate’, a mode of communication that essentially reduces the wholeness of whatever the ‘Truth’ may be into fragments that give the illusion of being within our reach, but which will forever be out-of-sync with the reality unfolding around us on account of them always being static snapshots of a unchanging reality in constant flux in our experience of it.

*Why do we prefer to cling to these fragments of ‘Truth’ as though they offer the whole answers that we crave? Because when we crave answers, what we really crave is control, and that control is either rooted in the fear and pride of our ego, or the conscious and unconscious desires that motivate us from moment to moment to try and either see ourselves or be seen by others in a certain light.*

These three things: **Pride, Fear, and Desire**, are the biggest barriers to the ‘Truth’ in any given instance, because they prevent us from being present in ourselves and in the world that we currently inhabit, and they cast imaginary shadows over the light of whatever stands before us.

As we have said already, the “Truth™” isn’t a tangible, or even comprehensible, entity, but simply a direction that we can move in if we choose. Every time we move towards ‘wholeness’ or ‘connection’ we are taking a step towards it, every time we take a step towards ‘fragmentation’ or ‘disconnection’ we are moving away from it (although sometimes short-term fragmentation is necessary for long-

term wholeness – e.g. in the case of a break up from a dysfunctional relationship).

In the terms used in **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, the ‘ego’ can essentially be seen as the amalgamation of conceptual ideas, patterns, and opinions, that come together to form our self-concept or idealised self, built in response to our own misplaced shame about whatever is actually real within us (aka ‘Realness’).

As this ego is comprised essentially of ideas and representations that we carry about ourselves within the mind, there is a risk that clinging to its self-concept for too long, while the rest of reality continues to change and evolve, means that we will eventually become miserable as our stubbornness leads to more friction between ourselves and the world and we tire ourselves out fighting a constant, and unnecessary, state of anxiety or dissonance.

**Fear, Pride, and Desire** are often the tools that the ego encourages us to buy into in an attempt to prevent us from having the gap between **who we think we are** and **who we actually are** exposed and having to go through the painful process of self-generative growth and harmonisation into realness.

In this sense, dialogue asks us to go against the natural wiring of the ego, because it specifically asks us to be aware of these barriers to ‘Truth’ that we carry within us at all times. It is for this reason that some people can find dialogue to be frustrating (they may also have ‘brainwashed’ themselves).

**Here is a brief breakdown how the Blind Trinity of Pride, Fear, and Desire can act as barriers to Truth and Reality in Dialogue. All three of them infect our assumptions, expectations, and ideas about the world, but they also bring their own brand of ‘blindness’ to the table.**

**Pride:** Your ego wants you to be ‘right’ at all times; it wants you to be able to walk into any situation and to assert your clarity of understanding over the rest of the world.

It wants you to feel ‘brilliant’ and to receive the approval, appreciation, and acceptance of any other human beings in the vicinity, even if you don’t really deserve or need it.

***All of these things serve as barriers to the truth because they serve as distractions or illusory, conceptual barriers to reality.***

If you listen to your ego, you communicate from the externalised intention of having other people validate your existence and opinions about existence; if you communicate from your realness, you are free.

All of these things serve to have us over-attach, or identify, ourselves with our opinions and ideas, to pontificate when it is irrelevant to do so, and to be less open to changing our minds and learning as the dialogue unfolds.

***Pride comes before a fall because it always leads to castles in the sky that are destined to crumble.***

**Fear:** Your ego doesn't want you to be 'wrong', it doesn't want you to be seen as inferior by other people, and so it prevents you from saying the things that you might actually need to say in order to best serve the people you're 'communicating' with.

This kind of unhealthy fear prevents you from disagreeing with the majority, because you are worried that you will be expelled from the tribe or be seen as a social pariah, and so instead it encourages you to sit meekly and to avoid rocking the boat.

When a dialogue is infiltrated by fear nothing really gets done because there is little to no friction; without friction, truth cannot be polished, and so nobody really learns anything.

To overcome this fear, we must learn to cultivate the skills of self-acceptance over self-esteem, we must learn to see our opinions as something that are separate from us and to offer up our views fearlessly for exploration, because we know that what happens to them does not happen to whatever is real within us.

***When people identify with their opinions or points of view, the world becomes a place of fear, because nobody can find the strength to lose themselves.***

**Desire:** Fear and pride alter our assumptions and expectations about the world, desire creates them. Desire undisciplined becomes a barrier to 'Truth' because, if we leave it unchecked, we begin to see what we want to see, not what is actually in front of us.

Bodily desires, such as the sexual impulse, or even something as 'simple' as anger that rises within us during a dialogue session, and our desire to do something about it, can affect the way that we interact with the Truth that is available to us in the moment.

On a deeper level, we also have desires about ourselves and our **Self-Image**, and a need to see ourselves either in, or not in, a certain light - this will actively cause us to avoid confronting these issues and by extension the 'Truth'.

**If the ego is attached to a certain self-image that has no connection to reality, then nothing we ever say or do will be real.**

We have spoken many times already in this book, and throughout **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, about how all dialogue is essentially a dialogue with the self, because the clearer the relationship we have with ourselves and whatever is unfolding or arising within our own process, the better we will be at interacting with other people and moving to a place of collaboration through collective intelligence.

Though there are many other factors at play, an awareness of the **Blind Trinity of Fear, Pride, and Desire** will give us a better chance at managing our egos, and stepping closer to the 'Truth', rather than turning our backs on it. We will be more likely to become real in ourselves and say things that offer real significance to the dialogue circle and the rest of the world around us.

## **Dialogue shows us that problems with thought create problems with trust.**

A theme that runs throughout this book and **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness** is the idea that the majority of the problems in our world are actually problems with the way that we think. When we say this, we aren't simply talking about the content, or the **WHAT**, of our thought, but the manner in which we think or the **HOW** - ultimately, a reflection of our relationships with ourselves.

Perhaps as an analogy, we can say that thought is an ocean: the '**What**' of thought can be seen as the waves that are carried upon it; for example, the words that we use, the arguments that we make, the logical structure of syntax, or anything else that is part of the *veil of symbols* that we project over reality in an attempt to make sense of it all.

The '**How**' can be seen as the ocean itself, whatever realness it is that carries the waves; in the terms that we are using here, this can be seen as the *manner* in which we speak, the **Fears, Pride, and Desire** that motivate us to deliver our 'What' in the first place, and the undercurrent of meaning that links all of the 'Whats' that different individuals bring to the table with them.

***When we see things in these terms, we begin to realise that the realest way to communicate with one another is to pay attention not just to the words that we each use, but also to the way in which these words are used.***

This is one of the reasons that we have said already that all dialogue is essentially a dialogue with the self; because, on the most basic level of communication, **WHAT** we say is affected by **HOW** we say it, which is affected ultimately by how we feel at the time, our relationship to our ego in the moment, and the intentions, assumptions, and expectations that we have brought to the table with us.

If we are only aware that our communication is impacted by what happens on the level of the **WHAT**, then we are only really paying any attention to the intellectual side of ourselves; we are being fooled by thought into thinking that thought is all we are, instead of a tool for expressing what is real within us (see **Personal Revolutions #73: Intelligence / Intellect**).

***The 'danger' of thought - in the service of the ego, instead of our realness - as it operates on default, is that it tries to fool us into thinking that it has all of the answers about ourselves and the world and that it can understand both of these things in totality.***

Functionally, 'thought' is just a tool that we have evolved to look for patterns and narratives in an ultimately chaotic universe and to project a sense of order upon it. One of the ways in which it does this is to fragment what is ultimately whole and then to treat these fragmentations as being a necessary part of reality itself.

The ability of the mind to do this has allowed us to make great social and scientific progress, but unless we acknowledge that all of this progress ultimately rests on only one 'part' (aka the intellect), then we will risk only ever exploring the veil that we have projected over reality in an attempt to understand it, rarely that reality itself.

When we understand all this, we can see that the dominant **WHAT** of cultural communication is a reflection of the dominant **HOW**. If communication problems can be seen as a symptom of something deeper, then this something deeper can be seen as the **HOW** - first of all how we communicate with ourselves, and then how this allows us to communicate with other individuals, groups, and then society at large.

What does our dominant, debate-based mode of communication say about how we see ourselves and each other?

It seems to suggest that we are speaking to each other in a way that shows we do not trust each other, that we are speaking from a position that filters the world through the tribalism of our lizard brains, and creates unnecessary fragmentation between individuals that see themselves as being separate from one another, and thus in need of defending themselves and their views from one another to 'protect' themselves from their own illusions about themselves and the world.

Modern debate is a mode of communication that has arisen in reaction to how we react to each other's egos. It is a reaction to the boundaries and barriers that we place to stop ourselves from getting 'too close' to others, or from revealing too much of ourselves and risk getting 'hurt'. It is a reaction to our own natural impulses, especially when it comes to how we relate to the opposite sex, or whatever else we are attracted to, or when we have to express emotions.

*Ultimately, this kind of debate is a way of communicating that asks us to sweep our own nature under the carpet because we are scared of the effects of that nature and its possible impact on the world.*

The **HOW** of debate is about communicating fearfully; it is about protecting the security that we think we have built over the course of our lives, and defending it as though those lives depend on it. Dialogue, in contrast, is a **HOW** that asks us to be courageous enough to communicate with one another in a way that is slightly more aligned with our nature, but at the price of having to truly reveal our realness and our humanity to the rest of the group.

Instead of communicating from a **HOW** that attempts to make others think that we have a degree of control over ourselves and the world, dialogue asks us to embrace the fact that we only have limited influence over these things at best.

Dialogue is a way of allowing real human beings to communicate with each other in a way that is real; it is about unmasking what debate unwittingly hides, by giving itself over to the ego, and confronting it head on.

For this reason, dialogue will always ultimately be about trusting each other with the ‘Truth’ of our own realness and trusting ourselves to be trusted by others. To do this we have to override thought on default and see beyond the fragments that it throws before our feet as we trust ourselves enough to put the ego in the backseat (See **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**).

## **Dialogue shows us that the main reason that we ‘think’ about things is because we are seeking something.**

Barriers to presence are often barriers to ‘Truth’, because, whatever the ‘Truth’ may be, the only place it can really be found is right in front of us, and if we are allowing ourselves to be distracted by the weight of

the past, our anxieties about the future, or the fear, pride, and desire of our ego, then we are not moving in the direction of the 'Truth' as a whole, but getting caught up in the fragments that seem to make sense but which ultimately block our view of it.

A related idea that we have explored here is the idea that the intellect, or mind, is a tool that fragments what is already whole in order that it may 'understand' it.

When we look at the way that our perceptive apparatus limits our view of reality 'in itself', or when we explore ideas that time, space, and causality are something that our brain projects on the world to make sense of the world, rather than things that exist 'out there', we realise that the vantage point from which each human being views reality from their position within time and space, is a view of the outside inherently shaped by the inside.

***As we have said already, there are seven billion of us on the planet, thus seven billion different worlds; when one of us dies, so too does a whole world. Everything is an idea, or representation, before it becomes part of our experience of 'reality'. Though there may be something 'out there', the world that you experience is the world that you carry in your head. No man is an island, but the island is always within him.***

What does all of this grandiloquence have to do with anything at the practical level of our lives and ability to communicate as real human beings in reality?

Well, if we accept what has been said about the intellect, or mind, ultimately being a tool that creates a sense of 'order' in a chaotic world, by fragmenting what is whole in the world, and, if we accept that, in order to move towards 'Truth', we have to ultimately make choices that will carry us in the direction of 'Wholeness', then we may be willing to accept that 'thought', and the concepts that it operates within, are sometimes doorways to the 'Truth', but they are never the 'Truth' itself (this idea that concepts cast more shadows than they allow light to shine through is a major thread running throughout this whole book and **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**).

***This isn't to suggest that 'thought' is always 'bad', or that it has no useful function in our lives, but it is to suggest that our thought about the world will always be limited, especially from the level of a***

*singular, essentially incoherent human being identifying more with the ego than reality.*

If the 'Truth' is mainly to be found in the 'present', and conceptual thought always serves to distract us from the present, then the question arises as to whether or not the 'Truth' is more likely to be glimpsed in the spaces between our thoughts, in the gaps between the words, in the silence that allows the waves of our thoughts to undulate and flow into our lives?

*In other words: if thought is part of the veil that we project over the 'Truth', then perhaps silence, or at least stillness, is the tool that will either help us look beneath the surface, or at least acknowledge the role that we play as the bridge between objects and subjects?*

When we see that objects and subjects are dependent on each other, then the 'Truth' becomes clearer as we learn to appreciate the illusory nature of the divisions between 'things' and step into the real flow of relationships (see **Personal Revolutions #149: Interdependence (Relationships) / Independence (Things)**).

Perhaps what we need to become more aware of is not just the problems with the way in which we think (that thought fragments, that we reify abstract concepts and treat them as concrete realities, etc.), but also an awareness of our motivations for thinking in the first place.

It seems to me that the majority of our thoughts arise because we are **SEEKING** something - be it something as simple as our next meal, or something as complex as approval, appreciation, and acceptance.

Whatever it may be, the thing that most distracts us from the 'present' is our desire for the present to be something other than what it actually is, or for ourselves to be something other than what we are within the moment. A good example here is how we can go forever around in circles seeking 'conceptual' closure that we will never find, because we can never find all of the information necessary to do so (such as a break up or something similar).

The ego is the only true death because it stops us from entering the only place where life is found: present reality. Before we can start to move towards the 'Truth' (whatever the hell that may be), we have to be able to immerse ourselves as deeply as possible within the reality that

has become available to us at a given moment. We have to be able to cultivate the skills to accept this reality on its own terms and to increase our awareness of what is offered to us, so that we can take responsibility towards working with everything available to us within it.

To do this requires that we develop certain qualities or virtues, for example courage or discipline, but also that we are able to simply be grateful for the gift of life and the gifts that it has to offer – in other words, that we become real.

This is why both being real and dialogue are linked to an acceptance of ‘death’, because once we accept that our lives will be over one day, we can accept that each moment is precious. This helps us to stop ‘seeking’, or trying to change things, and simply attempt to observe the ‘Truth’ that stands right in front of us, not the **truth that we are LOOKING FOR**, based on how we think things should or ought to be when we listen to the ego more than we do ourselves.

## **Dialogue points you in the direction of whatever it is you are by showing you what you’re not.**

The first of the **Keys to Dialogue** in this book reminds us of David Bohm’s dictum that our opinions are something that we *have*, not something that we *are*.

This is a gentle reminder to let ourselves become aware of the idea that, when it comes to our mental content and bodily states, there is an important distinction between ‘Observer’ and ‘Observed’; if we can get ourselves into the ‘Observer’ mind-set and remain mindful of what is arising within us, and of the fugacity of our thoughts, and the ever-changing weather of our experience, then we will be less likely to attach ourselves to the interpretations of the world that the ego has currently decided to make use of, and will be thus more likely to stop clinging when the time comes, and to keep learning and growing as we move through our lives.

This simple idea of ‘detachment’ from the linear or conceptual opens the gateway to releasing ourselves from, or at least becoming aware of, the hold that various other mental constructs and patterns may have over us.

**For example, if we are not our opinions, we can also say that we are not our:**

**Assumptions: The mental information, or unverified data, that we carry over from the past into the present and consciously or unconsciously project onto whatever stands in front of us.**

Assumptions are a shortcut to understanding and we couldn't function without them, but there is almost always a gap between the concept we carry and the reality in front of us.

Some concepts point more closely to reality than others but, if we're not paying attention, we can end up building a world of confusion for ourselves as we fail to connect our ideas to reality by assuming these ideas are true.

**Expectations: The ideas that we carry about what will or will not happen in a given situation - essentially, assumptions about the future.**

Expectations become ‘dangerous’ when we attach our emotional satisfaction or equanimity to them. This also applies to our ideas about ‘SHOULDs’ and our attempts to make others conform to our own ideals about these things.

We live in a cycle of expectation and result and our ‘happiness’ ultimately depends on having ‘realistic’ expectations, so that we can avoid disappointment, cognitive dissonance, and unnecessary friction or anxiety in our lives.

**Intentions: The desires that we bring into a situation, either about ourselves or about the world, and the agendas that we make ourselves tacitly responsible for on account of them.**

The Fear and Pride of the ego also plays a part here, as these things affect the way in which we handle our **desires to be seen in a certain light**, by either ourselves or others (e.g. if we want to be seen as ‘artistic’ or ‘creative’ and the ego is in the driving seat, we might say

things in a pseudo-intellectual fashion, because it makes us feel like we are living up to this image).

**Also:**

**Patterns:** If we have learned certain automatic reactions to certain stimuli in the past, we can often find ourselves repeating these patterns without thinking.

This is especially true if we haven't integrated certain emotions that are associated with these patterns or that allow us to escape from them.

If we keep finding ourselves in similar relationship dynamics, or making the same 'mistakes' in life, it's probably because we haven't yet learned to see and escape these patterns as we grow real through them.

**Sub-Personalities:** Our personalities are ultimately comprised of different sub-personalities that have helped us to 'survive' in different situations from the past, but which may no longer be relevant to the situation we find ourselves in at present.

An example may be somebody who used 'humour' in childhood to win social approval and thus continues to lapse into 'clown' mode inappropriately, or a guy who grew up in a 'tough' part of town and still gets defensive even though he's hanging by the water cooler in the office (see **Personal Revolutions #110: All of You / Part of You**).

**Etc:** All of these things can be seen as conceptual or linear tools that are ultimately a product of the intellect's attempt to make ordered sense of a chaotic reality.

Though they help us to function, they also block the real world from our view, because we can confuse the veil of symbols, concepts, and whatever else, for the reality that hides beneath the surface.

*This isn't to suggest that, as human beings, we can see 'reality' as it actually is, only that we can move more closely towards it, potentially living in alignment with it.*

But what does all this have to do with dialogue or 'real communication'?

***The further down the rabbit hole we follow the White Rabbit, the more we realise that many of our ideas about the world and reality are in a state of confusion.***

In many ways, this is simply a product of the fragmentary way in which thought operates, and our tendency to get lost within **the maze of symbols upon symbols upon symbols**, or the **Veiled Veil**, which we confuse for something that exists 'out there', not something that is simply a product of our processes of perception and understanding.

When we start to look more deeply into the limitations of concepts and the infinite abyss that stands between symbols and reality, we realise that many of the things that we treat as being 'real', or at least 'existent', are actually figments of the imagination.

In a reality that is in a constant state of flux, where everything changes, including our thoughts about ourselves and the world, we realise that the concepts that we carry about these things are simply an attempt at grasping them, never these things themselves.

Indeed, sometimes we're simply grasping at empty space and telling ourselves that our hands have magically been filled with fruit, even though there's nothing there.

If we are not our assumptions, expectations, intentions, thought patterns, sub-personalities, or anything analogous, and if we accept that 'concepts' are a product of the mind, not the reality itself, then we have to start reflecting on the fact that the 'self', 'I', 'you', or, 'me', in the form of the ego, is as illusory as anything else.

Even the distinction between **Observer/Observed** mentioned earlier is merely a conceptual platform constructed to help us try and gain understanding of things – when we think in terms of spectra and continua, we accept that all of these things are different stops along the same track, but never distinct or black and white.

There are no distinctions between things 'out there', because the only lines that exist between them 'exist' within our heads alone (see **Personal Revolutions #25: Shades of Grey / Black and White**).

**So the questions remain:**

If the 'self' is something that only exists as a matter of conceptual contingency, who the hell am 'I' and what is really going on?

How can we learn to communicate in a way that allows us to let go of the constraints of the concepts that we carry about who and what we are? Is it dangerous to do so?

What would a world look like where we see things as clearly as we can, even if the price of doing so is an effacement of the self?

If the 'self' as ego is just a window that we trick ourselves into gazing out of, then what will we see if we stop fooling ourselves?

If the ego is unreal but we all observe what unfolds, then is there only one of 'us'?

**This is the only thing that makes any 'real' sense.**

## **Dialogue shows that we live in a world of will, representation, and reflection.**

Dialogue shows us that we do not live in the world 'as it is' but in the world as we experience it on account of the mental representations that our brains show to us in an attempt to make sense of our limitations.

We have discussed this already, especially in relation to the limitations of our perception and the incoherency of our conceptual thought and knowledge, but when we look more deeply into ideas about how the 'world' works, and how our mind fragments and provides us with snapshot glimpses of reality as a whole, we realise that one of the major lessons of reality is that we live in a world of our own conceptual 'creation', and that our motivations for designing it are reflected back at us time and time again (see **#128: Influence Reality / Create Reality**).

***We live in a constant cycle of will, representation, and reflection.***

The idea of *the World as Will and Representation* is the central work of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, taken from his masterwork of the same title, which was released in two volumes under the title *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, in 1818 and 1844 respectively.

In the book, Schoppy follows on from Immanuel Kant's work on perception, and argues, very basically summarised here, that there are two worlds, the *noumenal*, where things exist as *things-in-themselves*, unfiltered by perception and knowledge, and the *phenomenal*, where our experience of things is affected by the time, space, and causality that our mental apparatus projects onto the noumenal.

This idea shares similarities with the ideas of wholeness and fragmentation carried throughout this book, **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, and basically every attempt to uncover the 'truth' since day one (if you look into it, every prophet has said exactly the same thing until somebody came along and skewed their view of it).

The long and short of all this?

In relation to what has been said already, our experience of things, the world, and ourselves, is influenced by a intellect that fragments what is already whole and which helps us to function in the world by placing us, as subjective observers, within a certain position in **time, space, and causality**, that only really exists within our heads, but which allows us to make sense of what is unfolding 'outside' of them.

Outside of this fragmentary intellect, in the silence between the words or the pauses between our thoughts, is the 'whole', the unfiltered, non-conceptual, formless, shapeless, directionless, striving, that Schopenhauer calls the *will*. As this continues to undulate and flow in the background of our experience, our experience of the world and ourselves is affected, influenced, and distorted by the concepts that we project upon it and treat as a reality itself. This distortion is the 'veil' (or even the **Veiled Veil** that we have mentioned already).

This view of the world, as being either will and representation, or wholeness and fragmentation, to take things a little further – as we do in this book and **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness** – helps us to understand that human beings are the bridge between two worlds; the **World of Necessity**, which can be seen as the world of reductionist science and determinism, and the **World of Symbols**, which can be seen as the conceptual veil of ideas and symbols that we concoct in our minds and project over the necessary.

The nature of this symbolic world, and our tendency to trust in the fragmentation of thought as it operates by default, means that we can get lost within the symbolic world and forget about the necessary almost completely. But, if we are able to live and communicate as a bridge between them both, we are able to enter the real **World of Relationships**.

In my view, our tendency to escape into the **World of Symbols** alone, always disconnected from reality, is a neurotic response to the apparent ‘horrors’ of the **World of Necessity**, such as the notion that everything feeds off of everything else, and that we will ultimately be dead one day.

An extreme example of what happens when we buy into the idea that the symbolic world takes precedence over the necessary, instead of being something that should unfold in harmony with it, is the idea that ‘everything is a social construct’ and so we can control our world by simply controlling our thoughts (or, more specifically – attempting to control the thoughts of other people).

Though it’s true that our thoughts about the world have an effect on our actions within the world, it is also true that our underlying will, curtailed or polluted by the fear, pride and desire of the ego, has an impact on the representations that we create about ourselves and the world. In other words, **HOW** we relate and communicate with ourselves and the world affects **WHAT** we will have to communicate to it.

As we are not independent variable within the phenomenal system of our experience, or upon the fragmentary surface of the world, but interdependent, it can also be suggested that we interact with each other at both the necessary and symbolic levels, whether we are aware of it or not. We are always in the **World of Relationships**, but our predominant attachment to either the **World of Necessity** or **World of Relationships** makes us forget it.

When we allow our will, or realness, to be overshadowed by the ego's fragments to the extent that it influences our representations - by seeing only what our fear 'wants' us to see, for example - we are creating representations that are a reflection of our inner state, not the outer state of the world, and which will thus be reflected back at us in the same way. We are allowing the **HOW** to determine the **WHAT** again, instead of valuing the potential truth of both.

This explains the experience many have had that accounts for the old maxim, *we don't see the world as it is, but as we are*. When we are in a 'good' mood, the world tends to be a much nicer place; for example, when we are 'in love' and everybody we meet seems to be smiling at us, this is because the representations that are being reflected back at us in our interactions with others are a reflection of the inner state that we are carrying with us. The **HOW** fuels the **WHAT**.

***In relation to dialogue, this idea of the world as will, representation, and reflection, is further 'proof' of the idea that all dialogue is ultimately dialogue with the self.***

If we are unable to develop the skills and qualities necessary for us to manage the will that unfolds within us, acting only ever on the ego's autopilot, overridden by our biological wiring and trust in concepts as reality, etc., then our world will be a chaotic reflection of this energy. If we learn to curtail the will and to transmute its energy into something more helpful or productive, then the world reflected back at us will generally be a manifestation at the same (barring chaotic events beyond our sphere of active influence).

***The world that you live in is a reflection of the world that you allow yourself to be represented within you; this is why the more you open yourself to the world, the more it opens itself to you, and the more real you become, the more real the world will be.***

# **Dialogue helps us to become aware of the WHAT, HOW, and WHY of thought so that we can communicate from a place of all three.**

Dialogue is a method of communication that allows human beings to make social progress by communicating in the most human way possible by accounting for all facets human experience: instinct, intellect, intuition, and imagination, etc.

It achieves this lofty endeavour by encouraging us to look at all aspects of what human beings bring to the table during the communication process, and by looking at 'meaning' and 'reality' in ways that accept both of these things on their own terms – not according the ego's ideas about them.

All of this is opposed to the highly 'intellectual' and 'conceptual' mode of communication that is prevalent in our society, aka 'Debate' , which is designed to compartmentalise, rationalise, and intellectualise what can only essentially be understood through experience, insight, or symbols that point us towards reality, not empty symbols in themselves: 'Truth™'.

Though debate plays an important function in our daily life, when dealing purely with concepts or abstractions, it only really deals with the surface level of our thoughts about the world, not the motivations behind those thoughts, or the qualities and attributes that play a role in the way that we deliver those thoughts to others – all of which play a role in the experiences of 'communicating' and 'being communicated with'.

Very simply, debate that focuses only on the **semantic content**, or the '**WHAT**', of our ideas and arguments, can only ever be an attempt to polish and refine the **Veiled Veil** that we cast over our reality, never one to glimpse at what hides beneath that veil.

This is because debate, as an exploration and comparison of **one conceptual idea against another**, will always be an instance of the brain attempting to understand itself by using the limitations of thought to place further limitations on the thoughts shared with us by others that don't complement our own and the points of view we have designed to *explain ourselves away*. It is the linguistic equivalent of a dog chasing its own tail.

In other words, 'Debate' only focuses on the tip of the ice berg, because it accounts only for the 'objective', 'measurable' or 'linear' side of what is communicated, aka **symbols, words and concepts**, but, as much of human communication is beyond conceptual language, anything that doesn't take the nonverbal into account will always be limited.

Instead, a more 'real' approach to communication, is to account for all of the variables at play when human beings communicate with each other; the **WHAT**, the **HOW**, and the **WHY**. Whereas debate only focuses on the **WHAT**, dialogue helps us to bring all three into play.

**Here is a brief summary of these three pieces of the overall pie (it isn't completely 'real' because it relies on concepts, but it can help us to acquire a tastier pie overall):**

**WHAT:** The 'What' of our communication is the content that we share with others when communicating. It can loosely be seen as the words that we choose to use, and the ideas that we choose to defend or present to others.

'Debate' often gets caught up in contrasting one person's '**WHAT**' against the '**WHAT**' of another, but, in doing so, doesn't really get anywhere because if you don't let in anything non-conceptual then the information brought to the table at the start of the debate will be the same as that at the end:

**Premises + Premises = No New Insight (because insight needs experience).** All that really happens in these cases is things are shuffled around a little bit.

In dialogue, the **WHAT** includes the same abstract conceptual content, but also leaves room for shared experience and insight, perhaps through stories or metaphor, etc. – it also has a different **HOW** and **WHY**.

**HOW:** The 'How' of our communication involves the manner in which we communicate and the qualities that we embody when doing so – ultimately, the answer to the question '*How real are we being right now?*'

In contrast to debate, which can be seen as very ego-based way of communicating, and which thus externalises everything, dialogue asks us to attempt to manage the **Fear, Pride, and Desire of our ego**, and to look at ourselves and what is arising or unfolding within us before we start attacking the views of others or defending our own.

Dialogue also means that we embody certain interpersonal skills and qualities, such as the ability to actively listen and to question our own views and assumptions, as well as to offer up our own views in the service of **Collective Creative Intelligence**, instead of only arguing to 'serve' ourselves - in the sense of looking for ways to corroborate what we already think we know whilst vanquishing opposing views.

Communicating in this real way is about being real enough with ourselves to put as much as we possibly can 'out there' and not defining ourselves by what happens to it.

**WHY:** The 'WHY' of our communication involves looking at and knowing our motivation for involving ourselves in dialogue and/or debate in the first place.

The simplest of our motivations in 'debate' is to 'win', but this affects the **HOW** and **WHAT** of the process that we involve ourselves in – as to be real involves a degree of outcome-independence; still chasing goals and results, but not at the expense of self-acceptance, or the reality that 'win' and 'lose' end at the level of human interpretation, clouded by the **Veiled Veil**.

When our only motivation is to prove ourselves triumphant, our reasoning becomes sophist and the questions that we ask are designed to tear down opposing views on the basis of perceived differences, as opposed to looking for similarities and questioning to build a real world together (see **Personal Revolutions #164: Question / Defend**).

The **WHY** of real communication is based around an agreement with all members of the circle, or the world around us, to uncover the

'Truth' or to move towards the wholeness of **Creative Collective Intelligence**.

This simple agreement allows us to communicate in a **HOW** that allows us to remain unattached to our views and to offer them up fearlessly, as well as to give a more authentic **WHAT** that makes us more real in the rest of our lives.

*These are relatively simplistic ideas, but they hopefully demonstrate that real social progress is not just about the content of the arguments that we throw at each other, but also about the way in which we communicate and our reasons for doing so in the first place.*

The more 'intellectualised' in the service of the ego our society becomes, the more we can find ourselves getting lost in the symbolic, surface-levels of '**WHAT**' and the maze of ideas upon ideas that this attitude can draw us towards, especially if we lack an understanding of the ego and how it deceives us.

**If we are to communicate in the realest and most human way possible, cultivating the most human society available to us, we need to acknowledge that the most effective mode of communication is the most human one available to us: Dialogue via Reality.**

## **Dialogue shows that unless we are 'present' much of our behaviour is a projection based on reflection.**

Dialogue is about communicating from the 'present' in an attempt to uncover the 'Truth' of whatever may be available to us within the moment. In order to reach this state, we have to first accept that all dialogue is first and foremost dialogue with the self, and to cultivate the skills of being aware of the states or ideas that arise within us automatically, so that we can take responsibility for them and work with the information that actually stands before us, not just the information that our ego's assumptions, expectations, or desires about

the world show in their place (see Personal Revolutions #124: **Presence / Projection**).

***The better equipped we are to manage the conceptual clutter that stands between ourselves and the rest of the world, the more likely we will be able to deal with what is real, not only what we think might or must be.***

When we start to slow down and take responsibility for our thoughts, words, and deeds, instead of only reacting to the world and the people within it, we begin to understand that when we are in the ego's passive state of floating through life on 'autopilot', we are only ever able to repeat the same patterns and to bring the same dramas, conflicts, or dilemmas into our lives.

This is because reacting automatically to the world around us, means that we relive the memories that our thought processes retrieve in reaction to similarities that we perceive between the 'present' and experiences that we have already lived through in the past. As we said previously, this is because we often believe that we are 'thinking', but what we are actually doing is retrieving what we have already 'thought'.

An example of reflection in this context may be that we 'meet' somebody in the present who reminds us in some way of one of our parents. This may be because of the way that they talk to us, the way that they look, or simply the air that they carry about them, or the power dynamic of the relationship that shifts us into what is known in Transactional Analysis as the 'child state'.

Whatever the case may be, we are only thrown into this state or dynamic when we allow ourselves to act in accordance with the **reflection** that our memory carries into the situation, not when we are immersing ourselves in the situation itself. This is why, if we are to live 'real', it is important to be able to override, or at least be aware of, the filter that our thought processes place over or through the present. When we talk about 'putting the ego in the backseat', in this book or **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, this is one of the things we mean.

Being reminded of somebody or something from our past isn't necessarily harmful in itself, but when we allow these thoughts to

affect our behaviours, we have made a shift from mere reflection and into **projection**.

A projection is any instance where our behaviour is affected by the reflections that our automatic thoughts bring to a situation. In the example above, for example, say we had a difficult relationship with one of our parents; when we meet somebody in the present who reminds us, due to our mental reflection, of this person in some way, we may start behaving in a similar way to how we would around our parents and thus potentially sabotaging the relationship.

*Dialogue teaches us to be aware of our automatic reactions to people and situations, and thus to the filter that they place around our reality 'in the moment'. Though we may not always be able to stop these reflections arising within us, we can at least become aware enough of them to modify our behaviour and to curtail our projections before they cause too much damage.*

This means that we will be more likely to handle our emotions in dialogue (or life) efficiently and to move closer towards the 'Truth' (whatever the hell that is) instead of being caught up in the same fragmentary patterns that we have been repeating over and over again with the price of stunting our own growth.

**You can only work with 'Truth' in the present and, sometimes, that means denying the ghosts of our past which the ego is given the appearance of life by; in other words, the ego is basically what happens when we either try to breathe life into the ghosts of the past, or let them take the life out of us.**

**Dialogue shows us that you can point your thoughts in a certain direction but you can't control their content.**

The myth of 'mindfulness' that seems to becoming increasingly popular these days paints a pretty picture of a world without problems where, if people just close their eyes for fifteen to twenty minutes at the beginning and end of each day, they will be able to acquire

superhuman mastery of their thoughts and thought processes and be able to spend the rest of their lives living out a blissful existence without trial, tribulation, or turmoil.

Perhaps this myth has come about because ‘meditation’ has become another commodity for the internet marketers and those on the ‘speaker’ circuit – so it becomes dressed up as a panacea for all of life’s woes, and another empty promise for those who start to meditate after believing the sales spiel.

The ‘truth’, however, as with so many things in life, is that there is no **Magic Bullet**, panacea, or ‘shortcut’: life as we experience it will usually be one problem after another, interspersed perhaps by periods of relative quiescence, but ultimately to be interrupted by ‘something else’ eventually showing up to challenge us – or, as somebody once said: “one damn thing after another”.

All regular meditation can do is change the quality of the experience of your problems, not your problems themselves – you still gotta take real action. To pretend that anything else is possible is a neurotic denial of reality itself – more so if you’re throwing yourself into ‘meditation’ so that you can reach ‘enlightenment’ and no longer have to worry about all those troublesome issues that are attached to your ‘self’ and all the flaws that you perceive it to embody (see **Personal Revolutions #146: Passion / Peace**).

*This becomes even more ‘neurotic’ when we start to consider the idea that, in reality, there is no ‘self’ – at least not the conceptual ego that tells you that you’re separate from everything and everybody else.*

Dialogue can help us to come to a more realistic understanding of our thoughts, the manner in which they operate, and the extent to which we can ‘control’ them, by showing us how the web of thought in which we are ensnared has a hold of us, and how we can’t necessarily extricate ourselves from this web, but can at least learn to accept our place within it and the relationship that we find ourselves in relation to everything else caught in the same trap.

We have already discussed the idea that we are not our opinions, expectations, assumptions, or any of the other ‘conceptual’ or ‘linear’ devices that ‘thought’ carries into the light of our experience, in an attempt for us to make sense of the world; the long and short of all this

is that 'we are not our thoughts; they are simply something that we have'.

Things become slightly more complicated when we look deeper into the limitations of concepts and the inevitable gap between the conceptual and the real. If we can accept, or at least work with, the idea that human beings live as the bridge between two worlds, the **World of Necessity** and the **World of Symbols**, we can understand that our experience plays out in the interplay between whatever is 'out there' and the veil of symbols that we project over all of this and filter our experience through as individuals.

*To repeat a core message of this whole book: this means that concepts are simple tools that we use to fragment and interpret reality, not that reality itself; if we treat the conceptual for the real, we will become befuddled on our journey to uncover the truth and ultimately waste the most precious time of all: our lives.*

This may not have much impact on our lives with 'simple' concepts such as 'table' or 'chair', but when it comes to more abstract concepts that we treat as being real such as 'I', 'Me', 'Self', or the ego's fear, pride, and desire, things become a bit more troublesome.

Let's assume for a second that 'I' don't exist, that 'Oli Anderson' is just a general conceptual agreement that myself and the people who know me have reached about a given arrangement of matter within time and space at given time (and the causal patterns that it contributes towards the unfolding of).

Though knowledge of this concept, like any others, helps myself and others to function within the world, and to make sense of certain information, there will always be a gap between the information contained within each person's (including my own) interpretation of 'Oli Anderson' and the totality of whatever actually flows in and with reality.

The only truly accurate knowledge of what it is to be 'Me' comes from my inner experience, but even then, there are limits to my understanding - due to the failings of memory and the general incoherence of human knowledge.

*All I can really know of myself is that I'm aware of myself in each moment (not 'thinking' in a 'cogito ergo sum' kinda way).*

But if 'I' don't exist then 'who' is thinking the thoughts that 'I' am thinking? Well, at the risk of sounding like a lunatic, how about 'nobody'? How about the idea that thought is just happening and a part of 'me' (whatever the hell that is) is able to observe thought and point it in a certain direction?

Allow me to explain: All thought really needs to get going is a direction to move in; if we have nothing to seek, or nothing to worry about, if we aren't prompted by emotional disturbance, or by bodily states and a desire to do something about it, our thoughts will remain relatively calm.

As we have said in an earlier chapter, thought is essentially the same as seeking, a need for the present to be something other than it actually is, and a movement to try and pull things into a way of being that is better aligned with the ego's fear, pride, and desire.

Pay attention to your thoughts now and you will see that there is some validity to this idea. 'Thinking' just happens and is going to happen whether you like it or not; all that you can do is somehow urge those thoughts to move in a certain direction, and to help you uncover a certain 'Truth', or understanding.

Decide now to think about 'cars', for example. As you do so, your thoughts will shoot off in the direction of what you know, or need to know about 'cars', and you will be presented with a chain of thoughts detailing these things. However, when these thoughts come, you will have no control over their content – you won't choose the words that these thoughts are enveloped in, for example – only the underlying desire to think about a certain thing.

*Dialogue, like mediation, shows us that an as-yet-unspecified part of 'you' can tell thought to move towards the 'truth' of a certain topic. Once prompted, it will shoot off in that direction and you are, if mindful, able to observe these thoughts and to learn from them. This is the state known as being 'mindful', or self-directed.*

When we are not in this mindful state, our thoughts are sent moving in different directions by something other than our conscious attention (emotions, reflections, etc.) – this is the '**Monkey Brain**' chatter that usually means we are being directed by our environment rather than any internal foundation of realness.

In either case, we have little control over the content of our thought, only the direction it moves in. Dialogue is a way of working with this side of ‘thought’ so that we can work on collectively sending our thoughts in the same direction of reality and building something new together.

**This is opposed to the fragmentary mode that comes with thinking we can control everything about our thoughts and having us all tear the world into different pieces through trying to move in different directions that don't even exist in the first place.**

## **Dialogue shows that the line between ‘in here’ and ‘out there’ is a trick of the light.**

This will quite likely turn out to be a chapter that can easily be dismissed as ‘nonsense’, because a lot of what I’m about to type out will sound counter-intuitive, and a bit more of it will seem like nothing more than a highfalutin display of semantic acrobatics.

Why would I continue to write whatever it is that I’m about to write if I have the foresight to know that it may lapse into senselessness that ultimately makes readers want to bang their heads against their desks in an attempt to restore a state of ‘order’ to their lives?

Because I’m starting to come to the realisation that by studying even the most disparate and desperate of topics that it is still possible to acquire ‘insight’, and seeing as though those ‘aha moments’ are supposed to be the fire in the belly of this whole ‘dialogue’, or real communication, business, I’m hoping that by exploring some of the more esoteric or unusual facets of this stuff that I might be able to learn a bit more about it.

***The more you write, the more you find out; or at least that's how it seems to go in my experience.***

Throughout this book, and **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, I’ve been getting caught up in the idea of ‘concepts’ and the

limits that they place on our understanding if we confuse the **Veiled Veil** that they project over our reality for that reality itself.

We have covered this basic idea already in one way or another, so I won't repeat it here, but what I would like to explore in this part of this book, mainly for the sake of clarifying my own murky thoughts on the matter, is an extension on what has already been said about the 'Self', in the form of the ego, not really existing because it is merely another conceptual tool, or reference point, for making sense of things in the 'world'.

As was said previously, if this particular version of the 'self' doesn't exist (at least in the way that we tend to think of it), but thinking continues to happen, then perhaps all we can really say about thought is that it is something that 'just happens'.

*If there is no 'Self' to be thinking it, then the idea that, as individuals, we have any real control over it is just another one of the illusions that our biological wiring and social programming ask us to live under the 'protection' of; the ego only has power over us if we assume that it exists in reality and is a real part of us - the quickest way to put it in the backseat is to see it for what it isn't.*

The 'illusion', or the collection of illusions, that can be referred to as the **'Veiled Veil'** can be seen as anything that distances us from the 'wholeness' of reality, and which asks us to perceive or understand the world through fragments.

In terms of 'knowledge' this can be seen as anything conceptual or abstract that we use consciously, or unconsciously, to make sense of ourselves and the world: the nuggets of wisdom or trivia that we carry about in our heads; the 'facts' that we fool ourselves into thinking that we hold, or even anything as simple as the workaday language that we use - which labels objects of our experience in the same cookie-cutter way over and over again - regardless of the endless subtle variations, or distinctions, between the specific 'things' standing before us when in reality there are no things, only relationships (see **Personal Revolutions #149: Interdependence (Relationships) / Independence (Things)**).

When it comes to our perception of the world, the illusion comes in the form of **time, space, and causality**, all of which are products of the way that our perceptive apparatus filters the 'wholeness' of reality, the

total perception of which would no doubt knock our socks off and leave us comatose on the electric overflow of too much 'information'.

As we have said already, dialogue is a way of communicating that acknowledges that human beings will always be limited in terms of knowledge and perception, especially as individuals, but it is a form of communication that also optimistically understands that we may be able to peak behind the veil once in a while, even if we are unable to ever remove it completely.

This is opposed to debate, which fails to acknowledge that the veil is even there and then proceeds to cover the underlying reality with even more darkness by fragmenting the fragments that it already thinks it can understand.

The confusing part of all this is that, once we buy into the idea of 'dialogue', in these terms, we begin to think in terms of things that are changing and unfolding, not static, and so we begin to focus more on the ebb and flow of life than on the detritus that floats temporarily on the swell of this flow and which will eventually be lost to the turning of the tide.

***We realise that the waves are just something that we use to understand ourselves as the swell of the whole ocean.***

What the hell am I talking about?

I don't know for sure because I'm in one of those 'stream of consciousness' modes of operation, but I think I know where I'm headed and it's here: if fragmentation only exists in the mind, then anything that can be seen as a product of fragmentation can be understood as part of the '**Veiled Veil**', or collection of 'illusions', already mentioned.

***Outside of our heads, everything is already 'whole'.***

It is only our limited perceptions and erroneous attempts to understand what we perceive that causes the illusion of separation and surface-level difference, and it is only our knowledge of things and our attachment to this knowledge that creates more fragmentation in the world (especially if there is a tendency for us to attach ourselves to the intellect as though WE ARE the intellect because we have given it over in service to the ego).

What I'm basically trying to say is that any black and white opposites can only be conceptual, never real, on account of the 'truth' that any absolute division is only possible within the abstract realm of the mind, not the ever flowing shades of grey that reality itself undulates and flows within (see **Personal Revolutions #25: Shades of Grey / Black and White**).

When we combine the idea that there are no black and white distinctions with two other ideas: 1) the 'self', in the form of ego, doesn't exist, so thinking 'just happens', and 2) there are no independent variables, only interdependent variables within the universal system that we are interdependent 'parts' of, we can start to see that the distinction between 'in here' and 'out there' is just another trick of the light, a remnant from the dualism of old and a confusion of the reductionist materialism of recent (the latter being thrown out into the world and 'measuring itself with itself, like a camera trying to take a picture of itself').

*When we shift to thinking in terms of systems and acknowledge that there are only systems within systems within systems, depending on where we focus our attention at a given time, we realise that thought and 'physicality' (or whatever you want to call it) are all the same 'thing'.*

The illusion that thought is something that we are 'doing' in our heads is simply something that comes from thinking in terms of the fragmentation that thought itself makes seem like the 'natural' way of things, but, once we acknowledge that this fragmentation is not '**The World**', merely the way that we make sense of the world, we start to realise that there is nothing really to make 'sense' of, because all that is really happening is that 'things' are happening and so are we in the form of one relationship with everything else.

## **Dialogue is an attitude more than anything else. We call it 'Realness'.**

Dialogue is about much more than having human beings throw words at each other, hoping that some of them stick, or have a lasting impact.

It is a way of communicating from whatever it is that is most real, or **universal** about human beings, a way of making actual human progress in the world, on account of building systems in the most human way possible.

This is opposed to the dominant approach to building systems that we currently take, where we attempt to squeeze 'human beings' into the box constructed by an idealistic view of what the 'rational intellect' boxed in by the symbolic limitations of the ego is capable of, and the possible fruits of its labours.

***The intellect is a gift, but it's not the panacea, nor is it the end of the world (there is no 'panacea', but reality is always the only solution).***

To reach a state of being capable of building systems built around human nature - instead of having to fabricate a nature for ourselves around inhuman systems - we have to reframe a few things about the impact that we have on the systems that we're already a part of, but also, more importantly, the stories that we tell ourselves about the human animal and the human condition as it plays out in reality.

We have to realise that the current system isn't something that is distinct from who we are individually and collectively, but **SOMETHING THAT WE ARE**; we have to acknowledge that, if the mechanistic systems that guide and shape our lives are not singular entities that exist independently of us, but are something that exist because of the way that we allow ourselves to be seen, then one step to changing the system is changing our view of ourselves.

It also requires changing the way we *allow* ourselves to be seen by those currently 'in charge' (see **Personal Revolutions #68: Systems (Interdependence) / Silos (Independence)**).

What is the long-and-short of all this?

***When you limit your understanding of human beings, you create systems that are a reflection and perpetuation of this limited way of thinking.***

As our discussions of dialogue have shown already, 'thought' isn't just the nebulous sensations that roll and unfold inside our heads: it has very tangible effects in the world around us. As David Bohm said,

'Thought can deceive itself', and the mechanistic systems that try to mechanise and treat human beings as perfectly linear, perfectly conceptual, perfectly rational, beings doesn't compute for this very reason.

***The world that we have constructed for ourselves is a product of mistaking the mind for ourselves and fragmenting ourselves because of it. Stop trying to compute so we can all breathe a little better. Get out of the ego and into the real world.***

As we have also said, dialogue is an important tool for social change because social progress is about breaking down fragmented boundaries between people, and dialogue is essentially an active exploration of these boundaries.

Dialogue is powerful in this sense because to engage effectively in dialogue requires that we adapt an attitude that is more aligned with human nature and human reality as we inevitably and universally experience it.

Instead of falling into the trap of thinking that the 'intellect' can comprehend the whole of our reality and experience, dialogue injects 'whole human beings' into the equation by also bringing instinct, intuition, and imagination – in the form of stories and metaphor, or whatever else helps fill the space in between the cracks in our perception and interpretations - into the equation.

***All of these things affect our understanding of the 'Truth' and the way in which we can access it in a real way because they improve our chances of glimpsing behind the Veiled Veil.***

More importantly, however, the 'attitude of dialogue' asks us to see human beings in a less limited way than debate requires of us.

From the get go, when we engage in dialogue, we acknowledge that human beings are creatures that continue to evolve and learn as long as there is blood pumping through their veins and air filling their lungs – debate limits human potential because it comes from a fixed mindset; dialogue keeps us growing, because it is about being real in reality.

When we enter a dialogue, we realise that there is far more to human experience and the human condition than just the 'machine' part of us – in reality, we realise that, instead of just being the cogs in a machine

that is imposed upon our lives from the outside, we are the machine, and that it stems from within us.

***If we want whole systems, we need to create them from the whole of ourselves.***

***Instead of assuming that human beings are capable of reaching an 'ultimate Truth', we see that it is a direction to move in and that this direction is inherently tied to our personal journey towards our own potential in the form of our own realness.***

To engage in dialogue, we have to go through the journey of cultivating the attitude in question - an attitude being componential in the sense that it is a compound of certain beliefs, ideas, understandings, and also virtues, values, and qualities.

***What all of these things are exactly is open to refinement, but it is certain that they are linked to what is most timeless and universal about human beings and human experience, instead of just the contingency of time and space and the culture that we have found ourselves in.***

Only once we learn to communicate and live out our lives in a way that embodies this timeless realness, we will start to shift towards systems that serve human beings instead of being serfs in systems that demand we serve them (see **Personal Revolutions #56: Self-Transcendence / Self**).

When we say that dialogue is an attitude, we also mean that it is a refusal; a refusal to boxed into a limited vision of what human beings are and what they are capable of; a refusal to believe that we eventually reach a 'complete' state, where there is no more for us to learn, no more potential for us to develop, no more Truth for us to uncover, or insight to work with.

***Human beings are waking to the idea that many of the systems surrounding us have been constructed by 'us' and have therefore been chosen by us; we are starting to see that if something has been chosen it can usually be changed, and that the quickest way to making those changes is to change the way that we communicate with one another.***

This requires changing the way that we see ourselves at the most fundamental level. When we change our view of ourselves, we change the systems that we have built for ourselves, avoiding having to cut off essential parts of ourselves, in an attempt to bend to the will of something that doesn't even exist beyond the daydream of the ego's fragmentary thought.

**For a more detailed discussion of this 'attitude' of Realness, check out 'Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness', an attempt to break this attitude down into its constituent parts. See: [olianderson.co.uk/revolutions](http://olianderson.co.uk/revolutions)**

## **Dialogue builds trust by allowing us to say what normally remains unsaid.**

Dialogue at its best is about uncovering the hidden assumptions, expectations, and intentions of all individuals involved in the dialogue session, as well as exploring the fundamental assumptions on which the organisation, society, or any other system, in which the dialogue takes place rest upon.

*It is due to this explicit understanding that the 'truth' can be revealed and worked with that 'dialogue' as a concept is often resisted, or seen with cynicism, by 'elites' within organisations whose power base relies on the unquestioned assumptions that the organisation is currently built around.*

When the ego is at the top of the ladder it doesn't want those at the bottom to see what the ladder is made of, because it has a scarcity mind-set around abstract concepts – in other words, the ladder doesn't exist, though when it comes to leadership and being real we can be at different points down the same road (see **Personal Revolutions #156: Abundance / Scarcity**).

What have referred to as 'debate' throughout this book is a way of communicating within the limits drawn around our understanding by the unstated assumptions at the foundation of our organisations, cultures, and societies.

It is a way of communicating from the outside in, instead of the inside out, within the limitations of the 'status quo', only ever polishing or refining the surface of how we have been conditioned to believe things 'have to be', usually because we have mistaken the sociocultural laws that we have been asked to operate and/or live within for the immutable physical laws of the universe itself (see **Personal Revolutions #1: Physical Laws / Sociocultural Laws**).

As it says in **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, if it was chosen by human agency, then it can be changed; the nature of reality means that the systems surrounding us that have been constructed by human volition and agency, such as the economic system, or the 'rules and regulations' that our organisations are built around, are flexible and open to change.

***None of these things are unchanging like the physical laws of the universe, such as the speed of light, or the effect of gravity on physical entities.***

Any time we treat the conceptual sociocultural laws that define our lives as being 'just the way it is', 'how things have always been', or anything else analogous, we are blinding ourselves to the wellspring of hidden assumptions that such language conceals from view and the possibility of meaningful change.

***We are giving the veil an undue respect at the expense of the potential that resides behind it.***

If something was created by human choice, existing purely as a conceptual or symbolic rule or set of ideas, then it is open to change. This doesn't mean that such change will be easy, depending how deeply attached the identities of others and ourselves are to the systems or assumptions in question, but it does mean that there is, at the very least, room for us to explore the assumptions that we carry which make these ideas seem to be inflexible and to give them undue power over our lives.

***Dialogue is a way of communicating that asks everybody involved to trust each other to be able to explore the traditionally 'unsaid', so that the truth can prevail.***

This requires, first and foremost, trust in ourselves and each other and the ability to forget about the symbolic power structures that exist 'out there' in the world when we aren't engaged in dialogue.

When we are able to create opportunities and creative containers like this (aka '**Dialogue Circles**'), we are able to remove unnecessary barriers to our personal and social growth, and to work in alignment with reality, instead of sweeping it under the carpet to uphold the illusion that much of what is contingent is a necessary 'just the way it is'. '

**It is what it is' but, when dig into it, we realise that much more can be changed than the ego may initially allow us to believe.**

## **Dialogue increases awareness of addictions to the Class A drugs of Approval, Applause, and Acceptance.**

Dialogue is a way of consciously and creatively communicating with each other as real human beings in reality. Ideally, when we enter a dialogue circle, we are able to enter a container that allows us to really 'see' each other as creatures of substance, not getting caught up, lost, or confused, by the symbolic masks that we are asked to wear in our organisations and cultures.

When we agree to come together with **Collective Creative Intelligence**, we work to remove the layers of superficial symbolism that stand as barriers to seeing clearly, for example, the 'titles' that we carry around with us, or the labels that we may feel a pressure to act in alignment with, because of the expectations that they encourage ourselves and others to carry about the world and its possibilities (see **Personal Revolutions #70: Substance / Symbolism**).

***Really, it seems that this is all many of us want when we talk about creating 'better' organisations and social systems for ourselves; the opportunity for as many human beings as possible to live and work in the realest way available to them.***

This involves creating systems where the line between the **World of Symbols** and the **World of Necessity** becomes increasingly blurred, and the human beings within these systems are able to interact with one another according to the readiness of their own personal will and the context of their lives within the **World of Relationships**.

Ultimately, this involves being driven by the internal elements of the game, not thrown off course by the externalities, and the pressures to conform to the arbitrary chatter that can infiltrate our psyches and behaviour from 'out there'.

We have said throughout this book and in **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness** that dialogue is essentially a conversation that we have first and foremost with ourselves. This doesn't mean that the 'external' stuff is unimportant, or has no impact on how we view ourselves and the world, but it does mean that before we can reach a stage where we are able to assimilate and deal with external stimuli in the most effective way, we have to clear whatever internal barriers cloud our vision to the 'Truth' and leave it forever out of our grasp.

Or, to summarise a thread that runs throughout this book (or anything else, really): we have to learn to put the ego in the backseat.

Many of these internal barriers have been covered already, in particular the way in which the ego makes itself manifest in the '**Blind Trinity of Fear, Pride, and Desire**', but also in the illusory mental content that we may attach ourselves to if we are unaware that, as David Bohm said, our opinions are something that we *have*, not that we *are*.

Along with our limited ability to perceive things in the world around us, and our ultimately limited or incoherent knowledge, the barriers between the average human being and the 'truth' (whatever the hell that is) are both varied and profound. Unless we become aware of these very human tendencies and learn to manage them, our quest for uncovering the 'Truth' about ourselves and the world will be Sisyphean to say the very least.

Though it can be argued that everything that we experience starts with the ideas that we carry in our heads, our relationship with our external environment, and the 'Truth' that we can uncover within it, can also be influenced by the things that we expect or desire to receive from it - usually because of our relationship with our own 'shame' and how the

unresolved 'stuff' that we carry inside affects our desire to be seen in a certain light.

Depending on how 'secure' we are within ourselves, and how conditioned we have become over the course of our lives to come from an ultimate intention of 'winning over' others, then we will likely have addictions to the following **Class A Drugs of Approval, Applause, and Acceptance**.

All of these can affect us at the fundamental level of our intentions and serve as barriers to realness, and therefore dialogue, by affecting the relevancy and potency of what we may share or say to the rest of the world (or dialogue circle, at least)..

**Here's a quick breakdown:**

**Approval: Our addiction to approval most often manifests itself in a passive approach to communicating with others that sees us deferring to the rest of the group or, if not the group as a whole, those who have the most perceived 'power' within it.**

When we seek approval, we hide our realness, censoring ideas that we feel will lead to us being seen in a negative light, and hiding our personal truth from the group when it doesn't align with the status quo as our ego interprets it.

Approval addiction means that we seek to be 'liked' by everybody, not realising that if everybody likes us we are doing something wrong somewhere.

With so many people in the world and so many good ways of living, if somebody somewhere isn't disapproving of you, you are most likely living as a highly diluted version of everything you could ever be – completely out of touch with your own realness.

The more addicted to approval we become, the more externalised our locus of control, and the more 'wishy-washy' we become as we modify our views to appease whoever we are speaking to (see **Personal Revolutions #112: Internal / External (Locus of Control)**).

None of this serves to move anybody any closer to the 'Truth' and prevents everybody from growing into realness.

**Applause: If we seek applause from our external environment and the people around us, we are seeking approval to the highest and most potent calling of the ego and its pride.**

This may make itself manifest in dialogue in a tendency to make inappropriate jokes or comments that distract from the flow of meaning, or in our breaking the 'code of relevancy' to share our ego's self-perceived brilliance with the rest of the group.

Seeking applause in this manner can be seen as a barrier to the truth, because we take attention away from the exploration of whatever is the topic of the dialogue, and try to direct it at ourselves.

By doing this, we are encouraging the group to serve our own 'ego strokes', instead of managing our ego to serve the group.

Occasionally, we may seek the applause of individuals, not the group as a whole; for example, when there is a member of the group that we are attracted to, or when we think somebody has power over our lives and can give us a promotion, or something.

Seeking attention in this way affects the intentions we carry into any interaction with others, because it means we are always asking to receive from them, instead of focusing on what we can give of our realness to help others increase their own.

**Acceptance: A desire for acceptance means that we censor and edit our understanding of the 'Truth', as well as the questions that we ask and the agendas that we bring to the table with us, because we want to be accepted by a certain group or seen in a positive light by them.**

More often than not, this addiction makes itself manifest in a desire to be seen as '**Heroic**', creating imaginary causes to fight for, and then bringing the dialogue around to attacking a strawman that allows individuals to feel as though they are fighting a noble cause of some kind.

Acceptance in these terms is analogous to approval, but whereas an addiction to approval means that we seek to be acknowledged, a craving for acceptance means that we seek to be acknowledged by a certain group of people IN A CERTAIN TYPE OF WAY.

Usually, this is because our insecurities create a craving for us to be seen in an 'idealised' way, rather than as we actually are; it is 'pure' ego at the expense of everybody's realness.

**All of these addictions cause us to think and act irrationally, because they serve to put our 'happiness' and equanimity in the hands of other people (the most unpredictable of all the things in the universe).**

When we are focused on acquiring these things from our environment, we are no longer present within ourselves, or the dialogue circle, and we are no longer able to focus on the 'Truth' in its clearest form because we are placing an increased number of barriers between ourselves and its light.

Only by cultivating an inner attitude that acknowledges that the ultimate judge of our thoughts, words, and deeds is ourselves can we reclaim some of the power that we have tried to pass over to others and to live and speak with more realness in both dialogue and our lives in the world around us.

**Dialogue is a training ground for the 'real world' as we realise that we can take our realness out of the circle and into the rest of our lives.**

When we enter a dialogue circle, we are entering a microcosm of the world and reality at large. This means that we are given the opportunity to come to terms with who we are within this reality and the conditions that this reality provides us for growth, learning, and insight.

In order to be able to benefit from the gift of dialogue, we have to be able to make an agreement with the other members of the circle to be as open and honest as we possibly can, as well as to be able to manage ourselves and our internal experience of anger, disappointment, or

frustration, when we are confronted with disagreement, or dissent, when sharing our views and ideas with the rest of the group.

***This may sound a little melodramatic, but really, when we enter a dialogue circle, we are entering an arena that will test the mettle of our egos.***

Dialogue does this by encouraging us to communicate in the most authentic way possible, not holding back for fear of retribution or the influence of the ego's fear, pride, and desire as they cajole us into defining ourselves on being either 'wrong' or right', instead helping us to reach a place where we feel we can say what needs to be said, based on its relevancy and potential to take the group as a whole towards the 'Truth' (whatever the hell that is).

Essentially, dialogue is a way of stripping away all the unnecessary distractions to **realness** (fear, pride, desire, approval-addiction, etc.) so that we are left with a tribe of real beings contending with the conditions of reality more than they have to contend with themselves and each other.

What on earth are we talking about?

**No matter who you are or where you are in the world, you will eventually have to confront the following things:**

**Uncertainty: Uncertainty has more to teach us than certainty and is better aligned with the nature of a beast that continues to grow and learn over the course of its lifetime (the 'beast' in question is the 'human being').**

Unfortunately, when we are overly-attached to our egos we become addicted to ideas of certainty, most often made manifest in the points of view that we carry about ourselves and the world.

The more vehemently we cling to our POV, the more likely it is that we need to take comfort in the illusion of security that these points of view provide us.

Though human beings can have a probable grasp of the 'Truth', with some views being more or less true than others, clinging to certainty means that we shut ourselves off to new information, and will be in a

greater state of internal conflict when contrary information comes into our sphere of reference.

**How dialogue helps with uncertainty:** Dialogue encourages us to go against our ‘natural wiring’ and to look at the views we already hold about the world with uncertainty.

We do this by offering these views up to others to test them for validity instead of throwing them at others as though they are unquestionably correct.

This practise over time allows us to ‘flow’ into life, because we are not constantly battling with what fails to meet our expectations; we learn to work with reality, instead of against it.

**Pain and Frustration:** When we become attached to the security provided by our points of view, we eventually numb ourselves to the possibility of growing through the conflict of pain and frustration because we put up barriers to any dissent.

This may help us to feel ‘good’ about ourselves and the world in the short-term, but the tendency to run whenever conflict presents itself, instead of turning it into a learning opportunity and running through it, robs us of the potential opportunity for real growth and insight.

This isn’t to suggest that we should go chasing pain and frustration, but it is to suggest that when these things present themselves in dialogue, or other non-dangerous situations, we pause to ask ourselves what this pain and frustration has to teach us about our views and our attachments to them.

Pain in this sense can usually be seen as a sign that we have more room to grow, or that we are putting too much effort into clinging to things for the ‘wrong’ reasons. More often than not, when we let go and stop trying to control things, we are thrown into the swing of ‘reality’ on its own terms and our pain and frustration subsides.

**How dialogue helps with pain and frustration:** Dialogue provides a container for coming to terms with the inevitable pain and frustration of the inevitable conflict and disagreement that we will face in the world.

Instead of reacting to this pain and frustration in a way that stunts our growth, we are able to push through and turn these experiences into learning opportunities that will help us out and about in the ‘real world’.

**Change:** We have said many times already that there is a strong contrast between a reality that is in constant flux and the concepts that we construct and carry about this reality.

Though reality continues to change and evolve from moment to moment, the concepts that we carry within our heads give the illusion that this reality is static and unchanging; this may help us to make sense of things and to function in the world (a bonus for sure!), but it can also lead us to buying into the illusion that we have more creative ‘control’ than we actually do.

When we forget that change is the natural state of all things, we forget that we can change our minds. This is especially true if we are attached to our opinions, expectations, and assumptions about the world because we think we are those things. Once we can accept this and disidentify from fragmented concepts, etc. we are free to move with the reality, not against it, as we build a realer world.

**How dialogue helps with change:** Dialogue gives you opportunity to actively seek reasons to change your mind, instead of only defending the views that your mind has already come up with. When we learn to detach in this way, we will be more fluid and responsive to the endless bombardment of new information that enters our lives on a daily basis.

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These are just some of the ways that dialogue helps to prepare us for life in ‘reality’. Many of these skills and disciplines require that we cultivate an awareness of our natural proclivities and weaknesses, as well as the limits of how we perceive and understand the world.

Understanding all this doesn’t mean that we will necessarily be happier or more fulfilled, but if we give ourselves the opportunity to practice these things, we stand a better chance of being happier or more fulfilled in the long run, as we are more likely to keep growing real.

# **Dialogue confuses us by showing that perceiver, perceived, and perceiving is all the same thing.**

We have spoken many times in this book and throughout **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness** about the relationship between wholeness and fragmentation. I've even gone so far as to say that, in any moment, the only choice that any of us really have to make is between either moving into wholeness or away from it into fragmentation (see **Personal Revolutions #52: Wholeness / Fragmentation**).

This might sound nice and give you a warm feeling inside, as you start to melt into the world around you, because you're in tune with the 'flow' of the whole, but as soon as we think that we have grasped whatever the 'wholeness' actually is, we become distracted from it and thrown back into the world of fragments.

*As the mind is programmed to constantly reach out towards things and grasp at them, fragmentation can be seen as an unavoidable part of our daily experience; it becomes another addition to the list of things that are inevitable, and inescapable, about human nature and the human condition, but that we can learn to manage if we are disciplined.*

Why is fragmentation inevitable in this way? Because as soon as we feel that we have 'grasped' something, we begin to distance ourselves from it because of the unavoidable gap between the concept that we carry of the experience in question and the reality of that experience itself.

Really, this all turns on the distinction between **knowledge** (the conceptual data or 'facts' that we mentally carry about the world) and **knowing** (our experience of these things, which is beyond words and thus ineffable, turned into insight and then action).

Conceptual knowledge can always be seen as a signpost, never the 'thing' that it actually points us towards and the only one of these things that can ever really teach us anything is 'knowing' – because we

can only really learn and grow through internal insight that fuses the concepts we carry to our inner experience.

***Without the fusion of insight and concept, we will only have experience that we can't quite touch, or carry around a bunch of concepts that we have never truly touched in our realness.***

All of this is very similar to the '**Veil of Maya**' idea in Hinduism, the idea that there is an illusory layer, treated as reality, between our experience of the world and the world itself.

When we talk about 'fragmentation', we are really using a shortcut for anything that can be seen as part of the veil, not whatever hides beneath it. However, we may be able to take a glimpse beneath the surface when we witness something beautiful or sublime, or when the fine line between objects and subjects is transcended for a moment, or when we have what Abraham Maslow called a 'Peak Experience' – ultimately, anything that makes us feel timeless and feel ourselves beyond the limits of the ego's fragmentary 'individuality' in the form of separation.

***Many of us may have had experiences like these and consider them to be life changing because they give us something to refer back to when we are caught up in the fragmented world of workaday existence. They become a source of real confidence, because they make us feel that there is more to all this than meets the eye.***

If we take this basic distinction between 'wholeness' and fragmentation and look at the **Veiled Veil** that stands between individuals and reality, we realise that there are two major sources of fragmentation in our lives:

The first of these is our perception, which filters the wholeness of reality within the context of time, space, and causality, and then shows us a snapshot that we can comprehend without frying our electrical circuits.

The second source of fragmentation is the knowledge that we carry about this perceptive information, the labels that we apply to it, the concepts that we carry - even the language that we use to make sense of the relationships between objects and subjects.

This means that the average human experience of reality is a fragmented understanding of fragments that is usually attached to and treated as being whole, unless we are aware of this tendency.

The implications of all of this for the ideas that we carry about who we are stand to be quite 'controversial': We have already covered this to some extent in our discussions on how the 'self', at least in the form of the ego, doesn't and can't exist, at least if we buy into the idea that concepts are not reality itself (the 'ego' is just another concept, or at least a set of concepts that we use to provide a feedback loop for whatever we are experiencing).

This idea is compounded by acknowledging that the distinctions and fragmentations that we make between things are products of the mind, not the world itself, and so the things that seem to be separate in reality due to the way that we use language, are actually all part of the same unfolding experience.

When we talk about 'perception', for example, we can say that the perceived is dependent on the perceiver and that the perceiving is dependent on both.

Actually, it would probably be more 'realistic' to say that perceiver, perceived and perceiving are all one and the same – the only difference between them being a product of the conceptual intellect.

**The same is true of the knowledge, the knower, and the knowing that we use to make sense of this perception, or anything else: there is only one of everything, and you are experiencing yourself as 'part' of it.**

## **10 Keys to Dialogue**

# **Keys to Dialogue #1: Your opinions are something that you *have*, not something that you *are* (via Bohm).**

Dialogue is based on the fundamental assumption that human beings are a part of the reality that they observe, not something that stands outside or beyond it; in other words, that the most ‘objective’ account of reality must also take into account the subject on which the objects of consciousness depend.

In these terms, dialogue is a way of communicating with ourselves and with others in a way that is aligned with the workings of reality to the furthest possible extent of our limited perceptions in time, space, and causality, as well as our conceptual interpretations about these limited perceptions.

What are the ‘workings of reality’ of which we speak?

Though human perception and conceptual knowledge will always be limited or incoherent, ‘reality’ offers us certain axiomatic ‘truths’, at least within the phenomenal realm of our experience, that can serve as guidelines for our understanding it or, at the very least, getting into alignment with it and ‘flowing’.

We have already discussed many of these throughout this book, but they include things such as an appreciation of the limits of human understanding and perception, of the benefits of a stance of uncertainty over certainty, and an acknowledgement of the interdependence of a reality in flux, of which each human being plays a ‘part’ (see **Personal Revolutions #12: Flux / Stasis**).

The **Primacy of Flux** means that anything that appears to be lasting, absolute, or permanent is an illusion. If we are unaware of this distinction – of the gap between the illusory concreteness of our abstract ideas and the flowing context of flux from moment to moment – we can fall into the trap of thinking that our opinions describe reality as it is, not merely interpret it as we think it ought to be.

***The longer we cling to these abstract absolutes, the wider the gulf between the world in our heads and reality as it actually stands.***

When we learn to acknowledge and appreciate the gap between the concepts that we carry of the world and the world itself, we are able to detach ourselves from the constant chatter of our opinions, because we realise that they are nothing more than a tool to make the best sense of the world in the moment, not ourselves, or the moment itself.

If we can let go in this way, we are more able to grow with and into reality as it changes, and to continue learning and moving towards the truth over the course of our lifetimes, instead of clinging to the illusion of control that these false absolutes lend us in the short-term.

**If we want to be whole, we have to overcome our tendency to fragment, and this begins by acknowledging that the fragments we carry are something we *have*, not *are*.**

## **Keys to Dialogue #2: Human beings don't possess facts, only interpretations (in the World of Symbols).**

Dialogue is a 'real' way of communicating that turns human limitations and weaknesses into the most potent forces for personal and social progress that they can be.

The first step to being able to come to terms with and make the most of these 'limitations' and 'weaknesses' is to be aware of them and to take responsibility for them with an attitude of non-judgment and acceptance. This is essentially connected to the idea that limited knowledge affects limited perception and that, due to this cycle, all human understanding, especially at the level of the individual, will be incoherent with reality itself.

Though this incoherence is unavoidable, by taking responsibility for it and acknowledging what is possible for us at the most basic levels of

who and what we are, we can learn to communicate in a way that plays on the interdependence that we all share in reality and start moving towards the boons of **Collective Creative Intelligence**, instead of clashing again and again with the limitations of only aiming for a mythical, omniscient individual intelligence that doesn't really exist (at least, not in the way the ego may convince us that it does).

In many ways, the idea that individual human beings can conceptually grasp any 'Truth' in its entirety is **neurotic** because it is a denial of reality itself that opts instead for an idealised version of human capabilities.

***We are all limited in the scope of our understanding, be it due to the limits of our actual knowledge, or more simply because of our limited vantage point within time and space.***

This is one of the fundamental problems with traditional, 'debate-based' communication styles: it's based on the idea that human beings can possess 'facts' or measure things with 100% accuracy; dialogue is a more 'realistic', and thus harmonious, way of communicating because it accepts that, due to the incoherence and limitation of human knowledge and perception, mentioned above, the best that any individual human being can hope to possess is interpretations over facts and probabilities over certainties (see **Personal Revolutions #78: Interpretations / Facts**).

The idea of interpretations over facts is more attuned with reality because it helps us to see that when people argue about their opinions and ideas, they are really arguing about the ways that they have been able to make 'sense' of the chaos around them - filtered through the **World of Symbols**.

***If we start from the fundamental assumption that it is possible for these 'sense-making theories' to be factually aligned with the 'Truth', we are more likely to attach ourselves to them and defend them as the clash of opinions unfolds.***

Ironically, this stance of certainty in facts often takes us further away from the 'Truth' because it blinds us to the possibility of growing into what is actually real:

If we start from the assumption that each person involved in the exchange only brings an *interpretation* to the table, it is easier for us to

detach, offer up our own views for exploration, and build on all the interdependent parts that are offered to the dialogue system, instead of only looking for meaning in independent parts selling themselves as whole truths.

***Instead of looking for what is wrong about the 'facts' of the other, we need to teach ourselves to look for what is right about their interpretations so we can all build real together.***

Though the 'Truth' may forever be out of grasp, acknowledging that each human being carries their own interpretation of it in their heads, allows us to get closer towards it.

How does it do this?

By looking for the similarities in our interpretations, by sharing experience, and building on what everybody brings to the table, we are able to create a clearer picture of whatever the truth of ourselves and our situation may actually be.

If we trust too much in 'Facts' and the conceptual certainty that they promise, we are choosing to focus on something that only really exists in the symbolic realm of our ego and its desires.

Seeing our views as interpretations keeps us in a constant state of learning, allowing us to detach ourselves from the hold that a neurotic need for 'facts' has over us, and to be better able to create with others because we view all interpretations with the same basic level of respect and potential (that's my interpretation of all this, anyway...).

## **Keys to Dialogue #3: When people are ready to really talk, be ready to really listen.**

Dialogue reminds us to be aware of the distinction between merely 'having ears' and actively listening to the human beings that are interacting with us. As an ideal, it is a way of communicating that allows us to cultivate the necessary presence to truly be in the same space as others and to serve the **Collective Creative Intelligence** transmuted into the insight of all involved.

What does it mean to actively listen in this sense?

It means that we attempt to cultivate the attitude of realness that allows us to take ourselves and our egos out of the equation and to start from the assumption that our silence often has more to offer than our words.

It means that we forget about our agendas and our expectations and our assumptions when possible and focus on 'seeing' what actually stands before us.

It means that we let go of our need to control things, such as the flow that we think or expect the conversation to take, choosing instead to let it 'happen' on its own terms.

*It means that we don't attempt to 'fix' people or the interpretations that they are sharing with us, attempting to bring them around to our own point of view, but instead just observe the views that they have to offer without interference, so that we can learn from them as they actually are and create something with what we find and the insight we uncover.*

Through real communication we learn to make friends with silence and to use it as a creative tool, not something to be feared or to hide from.

We realise that the spaces between our words often contain just as much meaning, sometimes even more so, than the words themselves, and we learn to understand the connection between our thoughts as they unfold in our experience and as the participate in the ‘tapestry of meaning’ between ourselves and whoever else is involved in the dialogue, or our lives themselves.

When we are really focused on listening, we are present, both inside ourselves and inside the world; we pay attention to what arises inside of us, be it extraneous thoughts, sensations, or emotions, and we ensure that they are not allowed to distract us from seeing as clearly as possible the ‘reality’ of the human beings and the messages that they are trying to communicate before us.

***In other words, we refuse to place unnecessary fragmentary blockages in the passage between one human consciousness and another.***

Dialogue teaches us to communicate from beyond the **Veiled Veil** of limited perceptions and the concepts and constructs that we habitually project onto reality; it teaches us to be aware of our natural human limitations and proclivities, so that we can connect to what is most real about our experience, not merely the illusions that we carry about it.

When somebody is really ready to open up to us in either dialogue, or life itself, when they are prepared to share their realness and to be seen without their ‘masks’, the greatest courtesy that we can pay them is to remove our own masks and to listen from a creative place of wanting to understand, instead of a reactive place that wants to confirm what we already know.

‘Listening’, in these terms, isn’t just about sound waves moving through the air and into our ears, but about modelling an attitude of service towards whatever arises within ourselves, so that we can use it to sustain our attention with presence.

**To truly listen to somebody is to truly be with somebody and the way to attaining this state is to first know how to be in yourself so that you can be present when it most matters.**

## **Keys to Dialogue #4: Do not enter the circle to be served, but to serve. Acknowledge that interdependence means that serving others means serving yourself.**

Dialogue is based on a view of human beings that sees them as each being interdependent variables within the same system. This means that dialogue looks at human systems as organic, sociocultural entities in which everything feeds off of everything else and the constant interplay between one variable and another allows something greater to emerge than the mere sum of the parts.

*This is opposed to a view of human systems that sees each human being as being independent of the things that unfold around them and the ramifications of their decisions and actions.*

This may be a subtle distinction, but switching to a stance of **interdependence over independence** means that we tune into the organic nature of the systems that we are living parts of, our own potency and responsibility within them, and the influence that our thoughts, words, and actions have on the world around us.

*In reality, we are not insensate cogs in the machine, but the machine itself; 'the system' isn't distinct from us, it is us.*

Switching to this stance and acceptance of interdependence has a number of implications for the way that we view ourselves and the world and, by extension, the way that we communicate within it.

Throughout this book, we have examined the ways in which debate is ultimately a self-serving and fragmentary way of communicating with others, because of its being built on the foundation of the ego's illusory 'independence'.

Dialogue helps us to overcome some of these issues by asking us to tune into a stance of **Collective Creative Intelligence** over mere assertion and destruction, realising that **One Mind + One Mind = One**

**Mind**, and so the best thing that we can do to contribute to the greater good of the overall system that we are a part of and constantly contribute towards, is to choose to serve the collective values and intelligence of the group as a whole.

***Ideally, we would be choosing to serve and move towards the 'Truth', aiming for wholeness, over the unnecessary fragmentation of the ego and intellect in its service. When we are real enough in ourselves to hold onto our values, we are able to offer up our interpretations and opinions about the world and reality to serve the rest of the group.***

When we enter dialogue in the spirit of service, we no longer worry about being 'wrong' or about being 'right' because we realise that the important thing is not the content of our arguments or ideas specifically, though of course some will be more or less true than others, but that we are able to contribute to the process of moving everybody else into their own realness, not necessarily taking the events or turning points along the way as an end-in-themselves.

It might sound a bit airy-fairy to say that all contributions have as much value as each other and, indeed, this would be the case if human beings weren't autonomous and thoughtful creatures with their own volition. But this brings us back to the 'magic' of dialogue, which is that it doesn't just focus on the intellectual or semantic elements of discussion, but also to the 'inner world' and experience of those involved in the process (see **Personal Revolutions #8: Process / Event**).

***To serve the circle and the collective intelligence of the group as a whole means not only that we offer up our opinions and ideas freely at the risk of being seen as 'wrong', but also that we make good choices about the opinions that we offer.***

This means that we have to know ourselves at the level of our own intentions:

Are we offering something to the group because it is relevant to what is being discussed?

Or are we offering it because we have an ego agenda that we are trying to inflict on people?

Or are we offering it because we think it will make us sound clever or brilliant?

Are we offering it because we are uncomfortable with silence and need to fill the void?

***If we are speaking from the level of our ego's intentions alone, we are not serving the circle; we're serving ourselves.***

Dialogue is about serving the **Collective Creative Intelligence** of the whole by acknowledging the role that we play within it and attempting to make the best choices within that context.

It isn't, like debate tends to be, about proving ourselves, or about 'winning'; it's about knowing ourselves and what we have to offer with enough precision and potency to be able to contribute as much as we can in the service of the truth and greater values of our dialogue circle, or even the 'human spirit' (or whatever) at large.

**Dialogue is about tapping into the best of our humanity so that we can create more humaneness with the other humans that surround us and all live more real on our own terms.**

## **Keys to Dialogue #5: Engage in dialogue with the people in front of you, not your ideas about these people.**

Dialogue is about communicating in the present with the information, human beings, and inner impulses that actually stand before us. It is a way of communicating from and within the realm of what IS, not merely what we have conditioned ourselves to believe MIGHT BE based on past experience, anxiety regarding the future, or the fear, pride, and desire of the ego.

To communicate in this way means that we have to be vigilant enough to pay attention to the automatic reflexes that lead our thoughts in the fragmentary and control-craving direction that they like to carry

themselves, and to instead make the shift from having the mind be our mental master to working with it as a mental partner (see **Personal Revolutions #125: Mental Partner / Mental Master**).

Much of this has been discussed throughout this book, in particular the way in which we can circumvent the dictates of the ego by shifting ourselves into seeing the world and our attachments to it in a way that allows us to feel comfortable with uncertainty, instead of chasing the illusory comfort that ‘certainty’ may bring us in the short-term.

The ego ‘wants’ to believe that it can understand things in their completeness, that it may even eventually uncover a ‘Final Theory’ of things and the world as a whole; dialogue helps you to see that, although this might be something worth aiming for, in a world in constant flux, it won’t be something that will be achieved with concepts and numbers alone.

***The ‘Truth’ is beyond the ego because the ‘Truth’ is beyond the intellect and thought as we commonly conceive it. And, as it says in ‘Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness’ – the opposite of reality is always ego.***

Dialogue helps us to understand that our ideas about things distance us from things. Whenever we treat concepts or ideas as the endpoint of our understanding, rather than as a doorway or shortcut into further knowing, we limit ourselves from experiencing whatever ‘Truth’ is available to us in the moment.

Let’s take the concept of ‘Orchid’, for example:

This concept, like any other label, is a shortcut to processing the information currently available to experience. When we see an ‘Orchid’ in our environment, our brain scans our memory banks and retrieves a concept that seemed to be appropriate in the past, attempting to project this appropriateness onto whatever is being ‘experienced’ in the present.

This is a great and useful tool that has allowed us to function and flourish in the world over the course of our history and evolution, but if we stop at the conceptual level and convince ourselves that everything about the ‘Orchid’ in front of us can be encapsulated in the idea, or mental representation alone, then we are missing out on the Truth that is actually present.

**No two 'Orchids', or whatever 'else', are identical; the concepts, ideas, and theories that we carry are shortcuts to understanding the context of what stands before us, never the concrete thing-in-itself. Though these shortcuts are a necessary tool for survival, none of these shortcuts are completely real in themselves.**

When it comes to something as simple as a flower, the gap between concept and reality may not have much significance to the way that we live our lives and the veracity of what we think we are experiencing in relation to what we actually are. Nevertheless, the above example of the 'Orchid' serves to demonstrate that the 'Truth' is something that can only be found in the present, not in some cookie-cutter imprint brought over from the past.

This is especially important to be aware of when we are dealing with other human beings whilst engaged in dialogue (or, indeed, as we go through 'life' itself).

Dialogue is a way of being that asks us to communicate with the actual living entities that are trying to communicate with us, not just the ideas that we carry about who they might be, nor the agendas that we have in regard to their arguments and opinions, or the things about them that we think need 'fixing', or bringing around to our own way of being in the world.

It is about appreciating the fact that everything in the universe is in a state of flux, including ourselves and the people that we share it with, and, therefore, our relationships over time (see **Personal Revolutions #12: Flux / Stasis**).

It is for all of these reasons that the concept of '**Presence**' is so important to both the dialogue process and the overall process of becoming real in itself.

Though our minds are programmed to incessantly grasp and reach out for 'certainty', or reaffirmation of the views that it already carries, we can learn to focus our attention on being with the real human beings around us in the moment, learning to seek out whatever new or relevant information is available in reality.

***We can focus on our breath and bring ourselves back into the circle; we can pay attention to our distractions and carry ourselves***

***back into the whole, instead of giving our attention to mere fragments.***

This doesn't mean that we become superhuman and act with complete equanimity and potency of response within each and every moment, but it does mean that we are aware of the limitations of the concepts that we bring to the table with us, and the capacity for every other human being to surprise us from time to time.

It means that when we notice we are acting automatically, or become distracted, we use this awareness to bring ourselves back to what stands before us.

Really, all this means that instead of coming to the circle, or, indeed, our lives, assuming that we already have the answers about what we are discussing and the people that we are discussing it with, we are open to exploring and digging into the rich depth of real humanity in front of us and the gifts that it has to offer.

It means that we don't allow the perceived differences between ourselves and others to get in the way of appreciating the similarities between us and the new worlds that we can build upon the foundation of such realness.

More than anything, stepping outside of our ideas means getting out of our heads and into the totality of our experience and understanding; to grow into our own 'Truth' and the truth of the world at large, we have to acknowledge that we can never hold the complete conceptual truth about anything; all we can do is move with what stands before us and do our best to uncover insights that will carry us all forwards by breaking ourselves out of the outdated, or otherwise incoherent, patterns preventing us from being real in the world.

## **Keys to Dialogue #6: Try to respond to each other consciously, not automatically. Create, don't just react.**

Dialogue gives us the opportunity to live and communicate with one another consciously instead of floating about with the ego on autopilot and wondering why we're not really getting anywhere.

It helps us to be less of a braying donkey, spewing out our rehashed opinions and agendas for the umpteenth time, and instead allows us to share the music that awaits inside of us as we contribute to the great symphony of life with those around us (see **Personal Revolutions #94: Conscious Choice / Habit**).

When we enter a dialogue circle, we're given the opportunity, should we be brave enough to make the most of it, to stop and reflect on our ideas, assumptions, and opinions about the world and to shift into the clarity of seeing things afresh.

By switching from a stance of certainty to uncertainty, from breaking out of the distractions of the chatter in our heads and the temptations of the world, we are able to make friends with the surrounding silence that is pregnant with meaning, and to create something from what **IS**, instead of what we fear or wish to be, because of the limits of our perception and the dictates of our ego.

So much of our time is spent swimming through life automatically, doing the same things at the same times, day after day, caught up in routine and habit, and living listlessly as we continue to uphold the scaffolding of the structures we have built to add a sense of security and 'meaning' to our lives.

Though these things often provide great value and comfort, the more that we cling to them as reality fluctuates its merry way around us, the more distanced we can become from the world as it actually stands in front of us. And, as we become more closed to ourselves and the world, the more closed we can become to new life; to seeing things afresh; to

testing ourselves, growing real, and moving up into ourselves and the world.

Dialogue teaches us to live consciously, not automatically. It teaches us to build real in the world, despite the cornucopia of problems and obstacles that will stand in our way. It teaches us to detach from the parts of ourselves and our experience that will continue to change over time so that we can respond to the calls that are made to us, instead of running away from them and stunting our own growth.

This means that we have to ask ourselves to see afresh whenever we are engaged in dialogue (or life) with the people around us; it means that, instead of letting our lizard brain tell us what to do, we tune into the realest and most human parts of ourselves - taking whatever is thrown at us to create something with it from the highest level of our realest human values (see **Personal Revolutions #128: Influence Reality / Create Reality**).

Creating – in the sense of working with reality to bring a real world into being, instead of only ever reacting to things - is a skill that we have to cultivate over time.

*The ego is programmed to defend itself from ever changing because it is fuelled on the illusion of stasis, and so, when our deeply-entrenched views or opinions are ‘attacked’, we are likely to lash out to protect ourselves from having to face ourselves.*

Sublimating our reactive energy into creativity is made easier when we are aware of what is going inside of ourselves and have learned to surf it out, but can be made even easier by reframing the thoughts attached to these reactive urges in productive ways.

For example, we can respond instead of react to conflict when we see it as a learning opportunity; we can respond instead of react to failure when we see it as part of a process, not an event; we can respond to being told that we are ‘wrong’, instead of reacting, by acknowledging that we are constantly learning and that our opinions and ideas in the moment are nothing more than the best interpretations that we have available to us, not the absolute facts.

When we learn to respond in dialogue this way, we can learn to become more responsive to life itself; we can live it as it actually is, not as the fear, pride, and desire of our ego tricks us into believing it to be; instead, we can live and communicate from the brightest lights of our realness, not the shadows and fragments that the lowest parts of ourselves cast upon ourselves and the world.

## **Keys to Dialogue #7: Try to use more of your time to move towards wholeness and less towards fragmentation.**

*In each moment of our lives, the only choice that we really ever have to make is the one that asks to either move towards wholeness, or away from it and into fragmentation.*

In the terms that used throughout this book, '**Wholeness**' and '**Fragmentation**' simply refer to directions that we can move in with our thoughts, words, and actions, and the underlying attitude and quality of real character that leads us to take steps in either one direction or the other.

On a deeper level, the direction of 'Wholeness' is about acknowledging the natural limits and proclivities of human knowledge, thought, and perception, so that we can learn to step back and respond to life, in the hope of moving in the creative direction of what is whole, rather than only ever reacting to the illusory fragments we carry into a situation, causing unnecessary friction in our lives, and preventing the production of the new insight that can set us free.

The human brain tends to lean towards fragmentary thought because this is the easiest and most functional way for it to make sense of the world. From the vantage point of our lives as individuals, it makes sense for us to be able to distinguish 'one thing' from 'another', especially if we are to have any hope of surviving and manoeuvring within the world of time, space, and causality.

For this reason, the brain and its mind by default has a craving for conceptual knowledge; a lust to grasp out and make sense of the objects that it perceives in its environment, and to classify and categorise and to create ideas upon ideas, nuance upon nuance, about the subtle distinctions that it notices within and upon the world around it.

As with most of the evolved features of human beings, this offers great survival value at the most fundamental level of our being as creatures existing upon a fragmented earth, but, if we only allow ourselves to live within the world fuelled upon the impetus of our automatic and reactive wiring, we may prevent ourselves from reaching the higher levels of realness that are within our reach.

***The problems of fragmentation are the problems of thought operating on either its own mechanical terms, or in the service of the ego.***

"Thought' runs on symbols and, if we aren't careful, we can fall into mistaking the **World of Symbols** and ideas that we cast as a **Veiled Veil** upon reality for that reality itself; we have already discussed this throughout this book, and in detail in **Keys to Dialogue #5**, but, to repeat once again, if we make the mistake of thinking that the concepts that we carry about something can envelop all of the information about that thing then we will always be out of synch with reality itself.

***This is the basic problem with thought: if we don't know that it's possible to put the ego in the backseat, then it fragments and conceptualises and then treats those fragments and concepts as being real.***

As David Bohm points out, the obvious example here, in relation to fragmentation, is the idea of geographical boundaries; though there may be a general agreement on where one 'country' ends and another begins, these boundaries and distinctions will only ever be fragments of thought considered real, not actual, physical boundaries that exist in the irreversible **World of Necessity**.

***When we live in a world of thought, we live in a world of fragments; when we strive to live within the whole of ourselves we live more truthfully with the world as a whole.***

Moving towards 'Wholeness' in dialogue means acknowledging that all human beings engaged in dialogue are 'in it together' and that '**One Mind + One Mind = One Mind**'; it means acknowledging that when we sit in a dialogue circle, or live our lives, no matter how diverse or divergent our opinions may be, we are all a part of the same system and we are all contributing towards its unfolding processes.

If we choose to cling to the fragments that we have brought to the table with us, or to get defensive and only attack the fragments that others bring, instead of seeking out similarities over difference, and attempting to create instead of react, then we are preventing the system from self-correcting and allowing the product of what all members have brought with them to truly emerge.

***Conflict only exists in human interpretation and so debate without reality will only ever go around in circles; the truth isn't just about the fragments of WHAT is said, but the whole of HOW it is said.***

As we have said, moving towards 'Wholeness' is about shifting to a view of reality, and the world we unleash upon it, that sees human beings as being interdependent variables within a system that thrives on interdependence.

It means acknowledging that 'fragments' only really exist in the mind, be it something as simple as the distinctions that we make between different groups of people within a crowded room, the objects on a table that all form parts of the same system, or something that has tangible political ramifications such as the perceived differences between races or geographical boundaries, made of thin air, but treated as walls that can never be broken.

Moving into 'Wholeness' is about stopping to reflect every once in a while on the fact that there are only really systems within systems within systems and that, just like the mind, **One System + One System = One System** and we all play a part within it. When we choose to move towards Wholeness we move towards 'Truth'; whenever we turn away from it and into fragmentation we can only cloud our vision (see **Personal Revolutions #139: Collective Intelligence / Individual Intelligence**).

## **Keys to Dialogue #8: Everything contains the seeds of its opposite: Think in terms of spectra and continua, not only in blacks and whites.**

Dialogue helps us to break out of the web of concepts, assumptions, and expectations that place a **Veiled Veil** over our ‘reality’ and teaches us to dance with a real world in constant motion, not an illusory one in stasis.

Instead of fruitlessly attempting to cling or grasp onto the ocean of meaning that flows through our fingers with each passing second, dialogue teaches us to move with the waves, and to realise that whatever we hold onto will eventually be swept away, because everything changes and everything flows.

This isn’t some ‘hippy’ do-gooder evangelicalism, but simply the way things are: Reality will continue to undulate and pulsate, and whatever conceptual net that we use to try and catch it will always allow most meaning to slip between its holes.

*Ultimately, this book and anything else I write to do with ‘realness’ is about learning to become comfortable with the gap between concept and reality, between expectation and result, between interpretation and fact, and to develop the character and fortitude to explore this gap with a sense of playful curiosity.*

But, in order to work with this gap, we first have to be able to increase our awareness of it; we have to acknowledge that the opinions and ideas that we carry about the world are not the world itself; we have to accept that, from the vantage point of a solitary human being, our conceptual knowledge and perception of ‘reality’ will always be limited and incoherent, and we have to realise that the mind/ego is a tool that doesn’t always want us to know the ‘Truth’ because uncovering such truth will often reveal something about ourselves that we may not want to face.

To quote **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness #124: Presence / Projection**, “fear is what forces us to construct our egos and shame is the glue that holds it in place.”

Dialogue can be an uncomfortable, or even frustrating, experience because it forces us to break out of some of the conceptual control structures that we have built for ourselves in order to make ‘sense’ of our lives and to feel secure in them.

By challenging our views and ideas, we are forced to look at the emotional reasoning behind the interpretations that we have made of past events and future anxieties; we are forced to look behind the explanations of how we got to be who we are and what the world is, and, sometimes, we realise that we are only really ever *explaining away* the things that we don’t want to face, rather than seeking explanations for the things that we actually need to confront.

When we see that reality itself is amoral and that ‘good’ and ‘bad’ only exist in the conceptual matrix that exists in the human mind, and the **World of Symbols** that we project upon it, we may face the uncomfortable realisation that the quality of our experience is on our own shoulders.

***When we see that ‘out there’ things exist without inherent meaning, we realise that any ‘good’ or ‘bad’ feelings that we experience are ultimately borne within us and so we see the world not as it is, but as we are.***

When we accept this, together with the information that human beings are a part of a reality in flux, and so constantly changing and unfolding too, we see that ‘good’ and ‘bad’, or any other dualities are simply different points along the same continua or spectra:

***Everything contains the seeds of its opposite. There is no black and white because the lines between things only exist within the mind.***

Dialogue is taken to a higher level when we train ourselves to look for the **Seeds of the Opposite** in whatever is presented to us, as well as within whatever we present to others.

When we look for the ‘good’ in the opinions that we initially disagree with, we are more likely to learn from them, more likely to find the scintilla of truth even amongst the darkness of our own fragments projected onto the present; when we acknowledge that our own ‘Truth’ is also linked to the false, we will be more likely to detach ourselves from our claim to having all the answers and to be able to flow into new meaning when the opportunity presents itself.

When we think in terms of continua, we realise that everybody is at a different stage of moving towards the ‘Truth’ on their own terms and we are more likely to respond to them in a way that will help all of us get closer towards the light as a collective (see **Personal Revolutions #103: Progress / Perfection**).

## **Keys to Dialogue #9: Aim for presence, not distraction. Be in the circle. Stop thinking of things to say and wait to say what needs to be said. Speak from the present; not the future, nor the past.**

Dialogue is a method of communicating in the most human way possible, which means that it involves communicating from the whole of ourselves, not just the fragments that we have carried over from the past and attached ourselves to for the sake of comfort and convenience.

We have discussed many times throughout these ‘**Keys to Dialogue**’ how the concepts that we carry of the world can prevent us from being present in the world, especially if we are to fall into the trap of thinking that our thoughts about the world only report on what unfolds, not participate in, limiting the depth of our experiences, knowledge and perceptions.

*Essentially, all of these cases can be seen as the symptoms of attaching ourselves to and over-identifying with the intellectual side of ourselves alone in the service of the ego. They are products*

*of putting the ego in the driving seat because we forget the difference between thought and reality.*

Anything that distracts fragments; anything that breaks up the unity of the group can be seen as taking us out of the circle and away from presence and therefore current reality. At the simplest level, this may involve things like checking our mobile phones for social media updates, doodling on pieces of paper, or simply gazing out of the window when we might be better able to serve the **Collective Creative Intelligence** of the circle by directing our attention at whatever is being shared in that moment in the light of our own realness.

On a deeper level, presence can be affected when we allow ourselves to distract ourselves from what actually stands in front of us, either because we are confusing our ideas and concepts of reality for that reality itself, without pausing to respond, or to try and move closer towards the 'Truth', or because we are more focused on ourselves and the fearful, prideful, or desirous demands of our ego that stop us from paying attention to what is being said.

Much of our ability to be present depends on our ability to be able to serve the group, not just ourselves under the influence of the ego (see **Keys to Dialogue #4**).

Presence is about connecting to life at the deepest level because it is about connecting to the highest level of realness currently available to us. Presence is about forgetting about the conditioning, emotions, and concepts carried over from the past, or our anxieties, demands, and expectations about the future, and trying to tap into whatever is happening in the moment and the information that is available within it.

'Presence', in these terms begins inside of ourselves, upon the foundation of our own realness, which is also why dialogue is such a potent tool for personal and social revolution; when we are present enough in ourselves to be able to have an internal dialogue about our own thoughts, feelings, and actions, we are better equipped to be present in the dialogue that unfolds outside of ourselves amongst others and our environment.

***When we cultivate a better relationship with the ego, we have a better relationship with reality.***

When we learn to communicate from within our realness, we are more sensitive to whatever is transpiring outside of ourselves. When we acknowledge that the words we choose to share with others in order to articulate our views are influenced by the emotional charge of what is going on INSIDE of ourselves, we are more likely to communicate from a place that sees things objectively and is less worried about defending positions or imposing agendas because it allows us to be more in tune with the rest of the group.

***We can learn to stop thinking of things to say and wait to say what needs to be said. We speak from the present; not the future or the past.***

Aiming for presence is a way into many of the other 'Keys to Dialogue', because presence is the key to unlearning a lot of the things that stop us from becoming a real human being. If we are alive and breathing, then we are necessarily tied to the present moment (it could even be argued that 'Death' is simply a complete lack of presence - on a fragmented earth, where the ego is the only true death, at least).

***The more present we are with those around us, the more alive we are, the more we are able to embody our higher level human values, and the better equipped we are to really listen.***

Presence shows us that there are more similarities between us than differences, that we can move closer to the 'Truth' with one another if we learn to respond instead of react, and that, no matter what fragments we bring to the table between us, they are all made whole in the presence of exploring them together.

## **Keys to Dialogue #10: Do no harm.**

Dialogue shows us that there is great power in words, but that there is even greater power within us. As an ideal, something to be strived for, but perhaps never attained, it is a way of reminding us to communicate from the 'realest' parts of ourselves in service of the greater good of us all.

It is a way of moving forwards and into ourselves and the world, knowing that we have made the effort required to look honestly our

views, perhaps even brutally so at times, but always with a tenderness and compassion regarding what we find; it is about dealing with revealed 'truths', from moment to moment, in the most human way, without judgement or fear, but always from the wellspring of our higher level values like compassion, discipline, or anything else that leads to realness.

The nature of the game requires that those who are involved in a dialogue are asked to be somewhat vulnerable. We are asked by one another to really speak and to really listen to one another, to have enough confidence in ourselves and our views to put them out before the rest of the circle to be scrutinised and explored and, perhaps, at times, even torn to pieces.

When things are getting particularly 'high level', we may be asked to share the reasoning behind our opinions, the motivations and emotions behind them, the desires that we have attached to these views and the reasons that we WANT them to be 'True', perhaps because they offer us a certain sense of security in the world, or because they serve to draw a curtain around some of the things we would rather not admit about ourselves, or because they serve to keep the masks on our faces, or whatever else.

***The potency of dialogue as a force for social change stems from its ability to bring people closer together, to allow them to 'know' each other better, and to clear away the debris of fragmentation that the mind casts upon the path to wholeness and greater social or organisational unity.***

When we are given an opportunity to stand before one another having shaken off so many of the illusory differences between us, we are left with the many similarities of 'human being-ness', aka realness, but to reach this stage, if we are to reach it at all, we have to be able to trust and be trusted by those around us with what we have to share with them. We have to feel that the pain and frustration of being 'seen' is worth showing off.

***When we say 'Do no harm', what we really mean is to maintain trust. Dialogue is a way of communicating that focuses on the idea of social change and progress being preceded by improved relationships. Change within any system is linked to the interactions between the people within it, and the interactions between people are improved by the way that they communicate.***

To be able to communicate in the real ways discussed throughout this book and **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**, we need to create cultures, or at the very least containers (hence this book asking us all to consider building or joining dialogue circles) where people can trust one another to reveal their views, detach themselves from them, and know that, no matter how painful or frustrating the initial reactions to these things may be, all involved trust and respect one another enough to create in the long-term and build together in a way that makes things more real everybody.

**When we trust ourselves to DO NO HARM, we are better trusted by others to build with them as they really are, not simply as they feel they must or ought to be.**

## **Final thoughts - Dialogue, Ego and Trust: Reframing the human condition and human nature for real change.**

This book has been an exploration of the potency of **dialogue** as a force for social and systemic change because of its inherent connection to the ‘inner world’ of the individual. Ultimately, we have been working with the simple idea that **real progress is a communication problem** because it revolves around improving the relationships between human beings.

A corollary of this is that if we are able to communicate in a more realistic and ‘human’ way, we will be able to create social systems that work in harmony with human nature, rather than having to live within systems that ask us to fabricate an inhuman nature in its service. This will allow people to live more fully as human beings, rather than trying to express themselves as the insensate cogs within a mechanical system (see **Personal Revolutions #68: Systems (Interdependence) / Silos (Independence)**).

**We have looked at three main threads throughout our exploration:**

- 1)** The idea that the **Ego**, in the form of fragmentary **fear, pride, and desire**, makes us crave control and/or certainty.
- 2)** Attempting too vehemently to cling to ideas of control or certainty, despite conflicting information from the environment, leads to a lack of control due to the fluid nature of the human beings in reality.
- 3)** The idea that ‘trust’ is the foundation of all healthy relationships and interactions, something that a progressive social system needs to engender and support in order to help people to become better equipped to work with inevitable uncertainty and lack of control, not diminish or make more difficult.

It has been argued that the creation of creative containers for learning to communicate in this way (aka ‘dialogue circles’) offers great leverage for change at both the personal and societal levels and to expedite a shift towards bottom-down leadership through **Collective Creative Intelligence**.

**This will allow us to start moving towards a human-centred world for real human beings, engendering human creativity, potential, and realness.**

## **Why dialogue?**

Social and urban progress really depends on the ability of different groups to overcome the perceived barriers between them in order to collaborate at the level of higher human values of their realness, such as truth, trust, and creativity.

Though different social groups and organisations may have different agendas, opinions, and understanding about how things can and ‘should’ be done, at the most basic level of their ‘humanity’, there are more similarities between them than the surface level differences – and, when we uncover these similarities, we can build something real upon them.

*Dialogue is an attempt to uncover these similarities, rather than only focusing on the surface level differences, by actively looking for reasons why human beings can work together, instead of getting caught up in excuses about why they can’t.*

This is in contrast to the culturally dominant, ego-based mode of communication, throughout this book referred to as '**debate**' that fights to vanquish any perceived differences, due to the threat that this perception presents to the individual ego and its need for control and certainty.

Though differences are important and something that need to be understood, focusing only on differences, neglecting what is shared, prevents groups from coming together to the greatest possible extent and kills our chances of building a real world for real human beings.

Most negotiations between groups 'fail' for very human reasons caused by the ego's craving for certainty and control, epitomised by an attachment to facts, goals, or other conceptual methods about how things should be done and the plans built around these assumptions.

Dialogue is a way of communicating that helps us to become more flexible and responsive than rigid and reactive and to work with the reality of social, organisational, and urban life as it flows and unfolds - constantly bringing new information to the table.

By helping individuals and groups to become more accustomed to the 'flow' of reality, instead of only ever attempting to stem the ebb of the tide, through abstract concepts and ideals projected onto this 'reality', dialogue helps individuals and communities to build more closely upon **WHAT IS**, not what they think **MIGHT BE**, allowing us to work and live with real creativity, instead of illusory stasis.

***Essentially, like living and growing real, dialogue is about working with reality instead of causing undue friction by resisting it.***

As the more we know about reality the longer the things that we build upon it will last, the more sense it makes to communicate in a way that takes as much as possible of human nature and the human condition into account. Doing this will ensure that we design better lifestyles, projects, services, and systems for ourselves.

For this reason, dialogue asks us to start our communication from the perspective of wholes, instead of just mere fragments; it is a way of communicating from the vantage point of whole systems within wholes systems, overcoming the '**Us/Them**' mind-set that so often holds back negotiations due to the fragmentation of the ego, showing

that there really is only an '**We**' and that we all contribute to the state of this '**We**' at any given time.

*When it comes to bringing people and groups together, an awareness of the ego's leaning towards fragmentary thinking and perception is a simple but powerful shift, because it helps us to overcome our innate proclivity to focus on differences and to switch to a stance of living and communicating from the inside out, instead of the outside in.*

Why does all of this add to the idea that dialogue is a force for real social progress?

Because the greatest leverage point for systemic change is in improving the quality of our relationships: If people just learned to listen more it would make a big difference; but if they also learn to speak more effectively, relevantly, and with awareness of how the 'natural', or default, settings of the ego affect communication and negotiation, the difference will be massive, especially if this action is strategic and carried out at the local and national levels (and internationally, if we're feeling optimistic).

## **How the fear, pride, and desire of the ego cause us to cling to control and certainty.**

When we refer to '**ego**', what we are really referring to is the conceptual ideal that we carry about ourselves as individuals (or collectively as organisations) and the fear, pride, or desire that motivate our behaviour in the world in an attempt to uphold this ideal.

The '**ego**' can also be seen as the part of ourselves that creates a narrative or interpretation about who we are as individuals, an idea about what the world is, and then attempts to corroborate this story or defend itself from conflicting ideas and information whenever presented with new 'facts'.

In either case, the '**ego**' is what is most unreal about us, because reality is forever changing and the ego is founded on the illusion of stasis (see **Personal Revolutions #12: Flux / Stasis**).

The implication here isn't that the ego is always a 'bad' thing, or that it is something that should be expunged from our lives completely.

Without the ego we would be unable to function or to set goals for ourselves, and so just as in psychology there is a 'healthy narcissism' - in terms of the esteem and functionality it brings - the 'healthy ego' can analogously be seen to drive us to achieve things in the world and to make the most of ourselves and our societies.

Problems arise, however, when we forget that the personal or organisational ego is distinct from whom or whatever it is that we are in reality.

When we acknowledge that everything in reality is in a continual state of flux, we realise that there is a gap between the illusion of absolute or unchanging certainty that the ego leads us to believe is a possibility, and the continual flow of new information presented from moment to moment.

In other words: the ego causes problems in our lives because it makes us believe that things which are in flux can be treated as being static. If we are unaware of this, then the things that we attempt to grasp will eventually slip right out of our hands, or crush us beneath their dead weight – this applies to both the ideas that we carry about ourselves as 'individuals', but also our groups, organisation, and cities, as well as the plans that we have for them.

***If reality, as we experience it as human beings, can be seen as an 'ever changing whole', then the intellect or mind can be seen as a tool that takes fragmented snapshots of this whole in an attempt to grasp, understand, or control it.***

Simple examples here, discussed at length now throughout this book, are concepts or labels, all of which are mental tools that we use to make sense of the world, never the world-in-itself. Again, this offers functionality as individuals to make our way about the world, but if we fall into the ego's trap of thinking that the fragments we have grasped are the whole of things-in-themselves, we will only serve to distance ourselves from the reality of ourselves and situations, bringing unnecessary friction or dissonance to our lives.

***It is this belief in the reality of fragments that causes us to focus on the boundaries or differences between things, rather than the***

*similarities that they share, or that we think in terms of silos over systems, or of 'Us' versus 'Them', instead of just 'We'.*

Though these fragments are a doorway into understanding our situation, we are making things difficult for ourselves when we treat these fragments as being real (the famous example here, given by David Bohm, is the borders between nations, existent in the mind alone but treated as a concrete part of 'reality').

Dialogue can be seen as a way of attempting to stand back from the purely conceptual, and the **Veiled Veil** that these concepts project over 'reality', so that we can get a glimpse, even if only a fleeting one, of what awaits beneath.

The ego that thinks in terms of fragments and which filters the 'truth' through its fear, pride, and desire, is the ego that has convinced many of us that everything about human beings can be understood through the 'intellect' and led to cultural dominance of 'debate'.

Debate in these terms can be seen as **a battle of egos through the clashing of concepts**; made manifest in the pride of wanting to be 'right' and fear of being 'wrong', as well as the tendency to value personal, departmental, or organisational desires over the greater good of the whole.

***When this Blind Trinity comes together - fear, pride, and desire - they prevent us from seeing clearly and encourage us to value fragments more than we do the 'Truth'.***

This battle can be seen as ensuing due to the ego's craving for certainty and control; by constructing points of view or stories about how the world should be, we convince ourselves that we have found a place of order or calm within the chaos of reality itself.

When people attack our points of view, unless we remember that opinions are **only something that we have, not something that we are**, we will react with more violence than is perhaps necessary - because we feel that the order and calm that we have worked so hard to construct to protect ourselves is being taken from us.

This is what the intellect in the service of the ego does: it creates a 'rational' pattern of how things are, were, or ought to be, and then convinces us that this pattern is reality in itself. These patterns can

help us to move in a certain direction, but if we forget that the '**Map is not the Territory**', we end up in the fragmented slumber of a dream world, not reality itself.

Dialogue is a way of overcoming these problems by acknowledging the universality of human beings and seeing that we are all particular 'Works in Progress', continuing to learn and grow through the uncertainty of life without being too concerned with the ego's ideas about 'right' and 'wrong'.

It does this by cutting out the contingency of culture or concept and valuing the necessity and helpfulness of 'Truth', realising that 'Truth' is simply a direction that we move in or away from, not an absolute state of being 'right' or 'wrong'.

When we see human beings and human systems as being involved in fluid learning processes like this, we are less likely to try and impose, or project, an agenda or set of ideas upon it in attempt to control the incontrollable.

Reality changes from moment to moment, so it's irrational to assume that the most rational thing to do is to create plans that *never* need to change. Once we learn to let go when need be, we are able to work together to create plans in the moment, not in our heads alone, but also out in the world as it currently stands and has the real potential to be (see **Personal Revolutions #119: Potential / Present**).

Seeing human beings as wholes beyond intellectual abstractions alone, creatures also endowed with instinct and intuition, emotions and insecurities, imagination and whatever else, we can learn to communicate in a way that embodies the whole human animal, including its limitations, proclivities, and, darknesses, creating more harmonious human systems overall.

But in order to do this, we have to remember that we need to learn to 'let go', to see the fear, pride, and desire, as well as the many difficulties with reality itself, such as unexpected setbacks, death, and fluctuation, as something that might not ever be excised from our lives, but which will always be something that we can manage and work with in ways that are creative, collaborative, and conducive to real cultural change.

## **It's all just a matter of trust.**

There is much talk these days about the benefits of helping our systems transition from a bottom-down approach to organised complexity, all turning on the idea that human beings can be 'trusted to do the right thing' when left to their own devices.

***This may be true to some extent, but we mustn't forget the way in which the systems in which we find ourselves either engender or diminish the trust that exists in human interactions within the system. Nor should we forget that WE are the systems that we find ourselves within and so the levels of trust we have towards ourselves affect the system as a whole.***

Much of this turns on the values and behaviours that the system in question makes 'acceptable', encourages, or is fundamentally built around due to overall system goals and specified endpoints.

Whenever we enter a new system, we enter a new cultural landscape with its own rules, values, codes, and conventions of how things 'are' and 'should' be done; in reality, systems make 'trust' more or less likely depending on how information and power are handled, as well as how the people within the system are encouraged to view themselves and each other and the 'successes' and 'failures' that they experience.

For example, if a system doesn't value transparency of information, then information will be treated as a scarcity and people will be less likely to trust each other in sharing it. If power structures are valued to the extent that people buy into ideas of **Truth by Authority** alone, then the top-down hierarchy will infiltrate the way in which people communicate with one another, with the fear, pride, and desire of the ego causing people to hold back the sharing of their own views, or to irrationally give credence to those coming from 'higher up'.

If we are too neurotically perfectionistic in our view of human beings and are **outcome-dependent** in our approach to reality, 'failure', or any other 'negatives' are seen throughout the organisation as something to be avoided completely, inevitably, and at all times.

However, a more real approach to the 'dark side' of human experience is to treat these negatives as something to be learned from. As we have said endlessly throughout this book, human beings are not 'static'

entities that have reached an evolutionary endpoint but learners in flux; seeing ourselves on these 'learning' terms means that people will be more likely to share views and ideas that are a potential source of insight for all involved, instead of keeping to themselves for fear of judgement by either themselves or others (see **Personal Revolutions #163: Honesty/Transparency**).

*Dialogue circumvents many of these issues from the get-go by working with the reality of human nature and the human condition instead of against it.*

This means that instead of trying to squeeze everything about human beings into the 'intellectual', or mechanically rational, conception of what human beings 'should' be, we also bring in 'everything else', to the greatest extent possible, and thus face the inevitable problems of conflict, uncertainty, disagreement, and anything else analogous and unavoidable in real human experience head on (see **Personal Revolutions #106: Motivation / Fear**).

*Doing this means bringing in the ego so that we can manage it; bringing in the incoherence of a single human being's interpretation of the world and realising that it is only an interpretation, not an absolute fact; it means acknowledging that we are not atomistic, singular entities that have no effect on each other, but that we are all interdependent variables within the same system.*

When it comes to the human condition and the way that it plays out in reality, we also acknowledge the benefits of uncertainty over certainty as a learning tool, the inevitability of disagreement, conflict, doubt, and mistakes and the opportunities they provide for growth, and the undeniability of change and limitation and therefore something to work with, not against.

Adding all of this up, we see that the best way to work with all of these 'things' is to work together, not just as self-perceived separate parts that have allowed themselves to believe that they have the 'whole picture', when this is impossible for a single human being, team, organisation, or whatever else.

*In other words, only when we trust ourselves to work with our own limitations can we trust ourselves to work together, turning these limitations into collective strengths.*

Dialogue breaks us out of the limitations and restraints of debate, a purely intellectual exercise, by creating a container that allows us to communicate from the whole of ourselves as individuals within whole systems.

When we enter a dialogue circle, a basic agreement is upheld that allows transparency and free flow of information, offering people opportunity to say what needs to be said, and is often left unsaid, because abstract power structures and sociocultural ideas are given precedence over the ‘Truth’ (see **Personal Revolutions #1: Physical Laws / Sociocultural Laws**).

**All of this helps us to build trust between people and ready ourselves for better interactions throughout the system as a whole, creating ‘better’ relationships, and a ‘better’ system for everybody involved.**

## **Trust leads to Collective Creative Intelligence; Collective Creative Intelligence leads to ‘bottom up’.**

Having taken into account everything that has been said throughout this book, we can perhaps make the suggestion that many of the complex rules that are in place in our organisations and societies at present exist because those enforcing them from the ‘top’ don’t or are unable to trust themselves and, therefore, those at the ‘bottom’.

Dialogue can help us to make the bottom-up shift by not only allowing us to become better systemic communicators, but also to make a shift from creating a baseline of ‘Collective Creative Intelligence’ that allows us to shift to working and living not only from rules based on concepts and outcome-dependent ideas, but to standards rooted in human values.

It does this by creating contexts for us to trust each other to break the rules when necessary and in alignment with higher level standards and values (see **Personal Revolutions #162: Standards (Values)/Rules**).

***Collective Creative Intelligence is essential for the bottom-up approach to work, because the bottom-up approach requires that***

*as many people as possible are able to make relevant, intelligent contributions to the direction of whole systems.*

In the terms that we have used throughout this book, '**Collective Creative Intelligence**' can be seen as a real approach to communication that revolves around valuing the 'Truth' and allowing anybody in the system to make relevant contributions towards moving towards it without allowing themselves to be blinded as individuals by the fear, pride, and desire that comes with the ego, nor collectively by the arbitrary rules and structures that are enforced through 'authority' and 'power' alone.

To reach this stage requires that as many individuals as possible have the skills and qualities of self-mastery required to grow real in themselves and know how to link this to the shared values and vision that link systems as wholes.

*This allows us to live and see ourselves as systems whilst remembering that One System + One System = One System.*

**Creative Thrivalist Systems**, aka 'real' or 'human-shaped' systems of the kind we have discussed throughout this book, are fuelled by **Collective Creative Intelligence** by design, and can't really operate without it, because the bottom up approach involves unifying intelligence in a more strategic, yet real way.

*For this reason, communicating in the realest possible way of connecting to our own realness first and foremost and then being real enough with others to foster this Collective Creative Intelligence means that we will be more likely to build effective bottom-up, human-shaped systems that allow more human beings to live fulfilling lives that embrace their realness, instead of asking them to hide from it.*

In contrast, this 'debate' thing we keep talking about is ultimately **top-down**, or at least designed to contain arguments within the framework of whatever is sent down from the top.

Dialogue looks at directly questioning the structure itself, not only arguing within its constraints, which is why 'dialogue' may meet resistance from those whose power rests on the unquestioned assumptions of the family, group, organisation, society, or whatever other system we find ourselves in.

**All of this be summarised as follows: Top Down – people at the bottom work for the system, Bottom Up – system works for the people. Debate supports top down; dialogue engenders bottom up.**

## **Conclusion: Personal Revolution comes before Social Revolution.**

Dialogue is a way of creating real human systems for real human beings by asking us to free ourselves of the inner and outer chains that traditionally bind our communication; it allows us to learn to communicate freely around the similarities that sit at the heart of ourselves and our organisations: the values, purposes, and visions that allow us to become truly connected to the world around us.

By helping us to cultivate the skills and qualities necessary to work with the more ‘difficult’ aspects of human nature and the human condition, we are able to work more realistically with processes as they unfold, and to be able to dance to the music that is actually playing, instead of only ever trying to impose our own melody on how we think things *ought* to be.

*It helps us to see that ideals may lead to solutions, but can never be solutions in themselves; and, when we see that reality is always the solution, we become less afraid of facing it and what it may reveal about who and what we are.*

Perhaps more importantly, dialogue teaches us to move towards the ‘Revolution’ of our own mind-sets and to allow this revolution to permeate the systems that we build as a whole.

By refusing to see communication as an ‘external’ or semantic process alone, connecting us to the inner level of who we are as real human beings, and acknowledging the interdependence of what takes place within us and the impact it has on the world around us, we cultivate the realness required to change the way that systems operate and influence us overall, creating a solid base for the bottom-up approach that so many of us think is a realistic possibility for a better, more real, world.

*When we learn to dialogue with ourselves and our egos, we are better equipped to have meaningful dialogue with others, and then*

*the rest of the universe. When one of us is real, it makes it easier for others to be real too.*

As learning the skills required to gain self-mastery or influence over ourselves takes time and consistent effort, it's recommended that we create containers, aka **Dialogue Circles**, where people from different groups can come together to drop their labels and agendas and to simply explore the truth of their shared situation together.

**With an attitude of playful curiosity and exploration, we can find the strength to look at ourselves and our worlds with honesty and openness and to build the best of both for all of us. Social change comes from better relationships and better relationships come from the way that we communicate, first of all with ourselves and then the rest of the world at large.**

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**If you found this book to be helpful then feel free to share it with others.**

**Check out Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness for 166 practical 'Revolutions' for personal and social revolution via reality: [olianderson.co.uk/revolutions](http://olianderson.co.uk/revolutions)**

## **Now What? Run your own dialogue circle.**

**If the ideas in this book have helped or inspired you in some way then how about running a 'Dialogue Circle' in your town, city, or organisation/workplace?**

The whole point of this book is that for there to be any real social progress, human beings need to learn how to come together around the shared value of 'Truth' (whatever the hell that is) and learn to communicate in a real way. 'Dialogue Circles' are the way for us to get together and do this.

I honestly believe that the more of us that there are in the world at least attempting to be real with ourselves and others, the better chance we have of building a better world. For that to happen, you need to either start a Dialogue Circle or to join one.

**Here's the basics of how to do it:**

- 1) Find a venue that will let you use a room for about 20 people on a regular basis (many places will let you do this for free).**
- 2) Start promoting the group on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, or Meetup.**
- 3) Get the members of the group to read this book (or at the very least the '10 Keys to Dialogue')**
- 4) Choose a topic for each session ('Death', 'Love', 'Truth' – whatever interests you and will provide enough conflict to ensure that people can learn from each other).**
- 5) Run a session at least one a month on average (I find that every three weeks works well).**
- 6) Do whatever you want with the 'dialogue' idea and share what you have learned to help others at Dialogueschool.org.**
- 7) Register your Dialogue Circle at Dialogueschool.org so we can see where these ideas are active and brainstorm with each other on the forums.**

This is a relatively new area of human thought and we are all contributing to it; basically, do whatever you can to get human beings communicating with themselves and each other in the realest possible way.

Have fun doing it, ensure that everybody involved is on the same page about the reasons for being in the Circle in the first place, and share your learning, insight, and topic suggestions with others.

**If you have any questions or anything then send me an email at [oli@dialogueschool.org](mailto:oli@dialogueschool.org) or get in touch via my website: [olianderson.co.uk](http://olianderson.co.uk).**

# Glossary of Terms (A Dictionary of Realness)

This glossary gives 'simple' definitions of the terms used throughout this book and **Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness**. These definitions are specific to my personal 'philosophy' so may be different to academic definitions etc. that you've picked up previously. It is designed to give you a good overview of any ideas that can help you to live a better, more real life.

**This glossary is constantly updated at:  
[OliAnderson.co.uk/Glossary](http://OliAnderson.co.uk/Glossary)**

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## Action

Forward momentum, rooted in the way things are (whether we are aware of it or not). The only **Real** cure for anything.

## Acceptance

In relation to **Dialogue**, **Unreal** acceptance is something that we chase from others because of our own insecurities. This process of chasing external validation blocks our view of the **Truth** and also stops us sharing it (this form of acceptance is one of the **Class A Drugs**). This is opposed to the **Real** acceptance of either the **Inevitable** or ourselves that makes life worth living in the form of our **Realness** (the final lesson of '[Personal Revolutions: A Short Course in Realness](#)').

## Anxiety

The feeling that occurs when we find ourselves lost in the gap between **Expectation and Result** or when our **Expectations** about the future stop us from acting. If we feel consistent anxiety, it is often because we are consistently taking erroneous **Ideas** about ourselves out into **Reality** and causing unnecessary **Friction** for ourselves.

## Applause

A desire to impress others with our own self-perceived 'brilliance' – if we give into this **Desire** too frequently, we are giving ourselves over to

the **Ego's Pride** and blocking our view of the **Truth**. One of the **Class A Drugs**.

### **Approval**

A self-imposed block to **Real Communication** or **Self-acceptance** that arises from a desire to hide anything that may be seen by others in a negative light such as **Opinions** that go against the status quo. One of the **Class A Drugs**.

### **Assumption**

Any hypothesis, **Opinion**, or **Concept** that is taken as a given and brought to the arena of our lives without digging beneath the surface of or questioning.

### **Attach**

Hang our **Identity** upon some **Fragmented** thing.

### **Attitude**

The final product of carrying a series of conceptual and experiential components such as emotional resilience, beliefs, ideas, and knowledge. **Dialogue** is about communicating with an attitude of **Realness**.

### **Awareness**

An **Openness** to what currently surrounds us, both internally and externally.

### **Biological System**

An organisational **System** that is structured like a biological organism with a series of 'elites' acting as a 'brain' at the top of a hierarchy and feeding instructions to the unthinking, insentient 'limbs' at the bottom.

### **Biological Wiring**

The way we evolved to function in the environment in which our species first came to be on earth.

### **Black and White Thinking**

Viewing the world and the things/people within it through the lens that they are either one thing or another with no in between. This either/or approach is what happens when we're unaware that our value **Judgements** ('good', 'bad', etc.) of **Reality** have nothing to do with an achromatic and indifferent reality in itself.

### **Blind Trinity**

The **Fear**, **Pride**, and **Desire** of the **Ego**.

### **Certainty**

The erroneous belief that our **Conceptual** understanding of ourselves, **The World**, **Reality**, or the people within it can give a picture of it all that is 100% accurate without any room for improvement.

### **Change**

The **Inevitable** state of things as **Experienced** as **Fragmented** creatures within a fragmented physical universe. Though there is no change in the **Whole** overall, we experience it in a way that means we have to readjust our **Points of Views** based on where we currently stand within it. The **Ego** fears change because it always brings more **Reality** (the opposite of ego).

### **Chaos**

Anything that enters our lives from beyond the ordered **Point of View** that we construct for ourselves based on the limited **Knowledge** we acquire from our limited **Perception of Reality** as a **Whole**.

### **Character**

The depth of our relationship with **Reality** as it is; **Personality**, in contrast, is often an expression of our **Desire** to escape from this reality. The more we push ourselves to be close to the **Edge** via reality, the more of our **Illusions** we lose, and the more character we cultivate.

### **Choice**

The ever present option of making things better for ourselves by moving towards more **Realness** in some way.

## Class A Drugs

The addictive ego-strokes of **Acceptance**, **Applause**, **Approval**, all of which block our access to **Reality** and therefore **Truth**.

## Closure

The self-enforced deception that everything makes **Conceptual** sense about something in the past.

## Collective Creative Intelligence

The **Intelligence** that emerges as a by-product of human beings coming together in their **Realness** and exploring a given topic or **Problem** together. It is the most effective way for us to come together and make connections between things in order to find solutions and new **Insight**.

## Communication

The **Process** of sharing **Awareness** with oneself, others, and **Reality**.

## Concept

A part of our **Mental Content** serving as the building blocks of our **Interpretations of Reality**. Concepts are at best only ever signposts to reality; some point more closely to it than others, but no concept can ever be 100% **Real** in itself. As we need to make use of concepts to make our way through **The World** (which is just a collection of concepts), the best thing we can do for ourselves is ensure that the concepts we carry are more real than not. This removes unnecessary **Friction** from our lives and prevents **Frustration** and **Misery** in the long-term.

## Control

The **Neurotic** belief that we can have total **Influence** over everything that happens in our lives and the results that our behaviour will have on ourselves and others.

## Creative Thrivalist System

A **System** discussed in **Personal Revolutions #68: Systems (Interdependence) / Silos (Independence)** that is structured

around **Human-shaped** assumptions of **Reality**. It assumes that human beings thrive when the barriers to real **Creativity** are minimised and as many people within the system have done the work required to **Grow Real**.

### Creative Intelligence

**Intelligence** that brings in the whole of human beings (intellect, instinct, intuition, imagination, emotion, etc.) whilst also acknowledging **Interdependence** over the **Ego**'s illusory **Independence**. This approach to **Creativity** ensures that we are more **Open** to inspiration and acting upon it and making the world more **Real**.

### Creativity

An **Attitude of Openness** that allows us to perform **Actions** that lead to more **Realness** in the world. Requires an acceptance of **Interdependence** over **Independence** to find inspiration for truly creative acts.

### Curiosity

An **Attitude of Openness** that encourages us to keep digging into **The World** so that we can build within it, instead of convincing ourselves we've found it and trying to tear it down because we have forgotten our connection to it and so **Fear** it instead.

### Death

The destruction of the **Ego**.

### Debate

An approach to **Communication** that focuses on proving the validity of the **Truth** we think we have already found and showing that anybody who disagrees with it is 'wrong'. Debate is opposed to **Dialogue** or **Real Communication**.

### Desire

Anything that stops us from being grateful for the way things currently happen to be. In relation to the **Blind Trinity**, Desire is our craving to be seen in the light of a certain **Self-image** that we have constructed

and turned over to the **Ego** in reaction to our own unresolved **Shame** about our **Realness**.

### Dialogue

A **Real** approach to **Communication** that asks us to communicate with ourselves first and foremost so that we can manage the **Fragmentary** barriers we carry within ourselves to our own **Realness** and then attempt to see the **realness** within those we communicate with.

### Drama

Games that make people feel good about themselves in the short-term by feeding into the **Ego**.

### Duality

The notion that opposition is the natural order of things because we believe that the **Fragments** we use to **Perceive Reality** are reality itself. This is manifest in an **Intellect** that thinks in fragmented, **Black and White** dichotomies, such as good/bad, up/down, me/you, instead of **Whole** relationships. This helps us make ordered sense of the **Chaos** of our lives but is part of the **Veiled Veil** we project over **Reality**, not reality itself (see also: **Concept**).

### Edge

The place where we are most likely to reveal ourselves to ourselves so that we can take new learning into our lives in the form of our **Realness**. To find the edge, we have to live in such a way that we are able to consciously dive into the gap between **Expectation and Result**, thus creating a better relationship with **Chaos** and **Uncertainty**.

### Ego

The opposite of **Reality** and any of the evolved **Fragmentary** tools that we use to try and convince ourselves that the **Illusions** about ourselves and **The World** are true.

### Event

A designated moment in an overall **Relationship** between things (aka a **Process**). Events only exist in our understanding as the **Fragments** we project onto processes in order to make **Sense** of them.

## Expectation

**Assumptions** about the future. Expectations cause most of the **Misery** in our lives due to the gap between **Expectation and Result** bringing a state of discomfort or **Frustration** when expectation doesn't land in the right place. The more we **Attach** to our expectations, the more miserable we will be as the gulf between **Illusion** and **Reality** is wider and so we have further to fall. A shortcut to living 'happier' lives is teaching ourselves to have **Realistic Expectations** about ourselves and the world.

## Expectation and Result

The gap where **Chaos** is most likely to enter our lives as our **Ideas** about **Reality** meet reality itself. Forcing ourselves to appreciate and work consciously with this gap allows us to learn what we need to know to be able to find our **Edge**, move through it, and **Grow Real** as we rid ourselves of our **Illusions**.

## Experience

Whatever we are currently **Aware** of or going through. We have no choice but to go through whatever we are experiencing if we have any hope of making sense and learning from it, so resisting it makes our lives more difficult than they need to be. Just because we are experiencing something doesn't mean it is **Real**, but taking a good look at it is the only way to **Grow Real** in ourselves and **The World**.

## Exploration

The act of looking more deeply into things which requires the **Attitude of Curiosity**. We do not need an aim or set **Goal** for our explorations, just a promise to ourselves to set out and see what we find. We can't explore the world unless we are **Open** to it.

## Fear

In the service of the **Ego**, fear is anything that stops us from expressing our **Realness** or moving towards the **Edge** and anything that might reveal this realness to us. Some fear is **Instinctual** and has evolved to protect us (like if we see a dangerous animal or something). This kind of instinctual fear is nothing to worry about as it has evolved to help us

survive (unless it goes AWOL and merges with the ego to create a constant state of **Anxiety**).

### **Flow**

The feeling of being completely **Present** that comes from removing the **Fragmentary** barriers keeping us from the **Edge**. Examples might be riding a motorbike, climbing a mountain, having sex, or simply dedicating ourselves to the **Process** living in a **Real** way day after day.

### **Flux**

The **Process** of constant and inexorable **Change** that unfolds in **Reality** as we experience it through **Fragmented** perceptions and interpretations. Aligning ourselves with flux means that we are less likely to lose our **Realness** as we attempt to cling to the **Veiled Veil**.

### **Fragmentation**

Anything that blocks our view of the **Whole** or which acts as an **Illusory** barrier that prevents us from **Flowing** with it. We need fragmentation to be able to function in **The World** but when we **Identify** with the fragmentation we carry it brings unnecessary **Friction** into our lives. Examples: opinions, emotions, concepts, expectations, anything with the end result of breaking things down instead of building something **Real**.

### **Friction**

The state of dissonance, **Frustration**, or **Anxiety** that enters our lives when we cling to **Fragmentary** ideas or beliefs that are not **Real**. Clinging to these ideas with too much stubbornness means that there is a constant tension between ourselves and **Reality** as a whole. Only by letting go can we start **Flowing** again and find a solid foundation on which to build. Some people spend their whole lives living with this friction and are never 'happy'.

### **Frustration**

The feeling that occurs when our **Expectations** are constantly misaligned with the **Reality** in front of us and we aren't ready to face it yet because it triggers unresolved **Shame**.

### **Goal**

Something to move towards. Some goals are **Real**, because they are rooted predominantly in **Reality**; some goals are **Unreal**, because they are rooted in the **Ego** and it's **Ideals** so carry us away from ourselves.

## God

A fancy word for '**Chaos**' as we experience it in the gap between **Expectation and Result**.

## Grow Real

To go through the **Process** of ridding ourselves of our **Illusions** about who we are and what **The World** is in **Reality**. This allows us to build with **Inevitable** or inescapable limits or to smash through the **Self-limiting Beliefs** and ideas that hold us back.

## Growth

The **Process** by which we unlearn all of the **Fragmentary** illusions that keep us from ourselves as we are in our **Realness**. **Real Growth** is what happens when we face **Reality** on its own terms so that we can build upon our own. This type of growth is always open to all of us, if we are able to find our **Edge**, but usually finds us in times of difficulty, as this is when we are most likely to push through **Obstacles**, uncovering what is **Real** and what is mere **Illusion** as we are forced into the gap between **Expectation and Result**.

## Heroism

The feeling that either ourselves or somebody else is doing something worth fighting for. **Real** heroism is about moving **The World** towards more **Realness**; **Unreal** heroism is about creating drama so we can keep our **Ego** in place.

## Heuristic

A 'Rule of Thumb' that we carry into a situation as a shortcut to making **Sense** of it based on previous **Experience** (though not necessarily our own). Heuristics often help us greatly but they are still not necessarily the **Reality** of the situation before our very eyes.

## Hide

To live in denial of something, instead of facing it and moving towards making it **Real**.

## HOW

The way in which we choose to **Communicate**. Ultimately, we can choose to communicate in a way that is **Real**, or a way that is **Unreal**.

## Humanity

Our **True** nature. Being out of touch with one's humanity leads to **Frustration** and then **Misery**.

## Human-shaped World

A **World** that has been designed based on **Assumptions** about human beings that are aligned with **Reality**, not just our **Ideals** or **Fears** about it. Designing a human-shaped world ultimately means that we design **Systems** that serve us, not systems that we end up serving at the expense of our **Humanity**. These systems aren't constrained by our **Self-Limiting Beliefs** about ourselves but nor are they so **Neurotic** that they have no foundation in **Reality**.

## Ideas

Collections of **Concepts** that trigger a jolt of excitement within us when we make new connections between things. Worthless without some kind of **Action** (because they only 'exist' in the **World of Symbols** without it).

## Ideals

Things that we want to be **True** and attempt to move towards. When our ideals are rooted in the **Ego** and its insecurity we move further away from **Reality**; when our ideals are rooted in our **Realness**, we take a foundation of things as they are and build something wonderful upon it.

## Identify

To think that one IS a particular **Fragment** or collection of fragments instead of just seeing that these fragments are something we HAVE.

## Identity Politics

What happens when people believe that their opinions about themselves hold more **Truth** than the **Realness** of themselves or others.

### **Illusion**

Any belief that blocks our view of ourselves, others, or **Reality** because it helps us to keep the **Ego** in place. The ego is ultimately constructed of illusions in the form of the **Veiled Veil** and the **Fragments** it is 'made' of.

### **Independence**

The erroneous belief that everything is separate or disconnected from everything else. This kind of independence is what happens when the brain's evolved **Fragmentary** thinking style is **Projected** out into **The World** and treated as being **Real**. It is the opposite of **Interdependence** and involves seeing **Reality** as a series of 'things' instead of a series of **Relationships**.

### **Inevitable**

Whatever currently can't be avoided about **Real** human life (death, problems, change, etc.).

### **Influence**

The power that we have to **Change** things about ourselves, **The World**, or **Reality** around us. It is important to note that we always have some degree of influence over ourselves or our situations, even if only internally, but we do not have the power of total **Creation** as **Reality** creates a certain set of conditions for us to work our influence within. If we think we can 'create' everything in our lives, we become **Neurotic**; if we accept our influence, we can work with what is **Inevitable** as it unfold in the '**Chaos**' of the gap between **Expectation** and **Result**. Real **Creativity** is about having enough influence over ourselves to remain **Open**.

### **Insight**

Any flash of **Truth** that challenges the **Concepts** we have been allowing to limit our view of what is true in the **Whole**.

## Instinct

Any motivation that is rooted in the body and the body alone. Instincts have evolved to protect us, we need to tune into them to feel alive, but they hold back our **Growth** if we only ever succumb to them. Our happiness is a product of managing this **Biological Wiring** and the **Social Programming** we have evolved and been exposed to so that we can live in the **World of Relationships**.

## Intellect

Our ability to make sense of **Conceptual** information and create **Interpretations of Reality**. An amazing blessing when we see it as a tool, or a curse when we allow it to take over our lives by constantly using it to uphold the **Ego** and its denial of reality.

## Intelligence

Your ability to respond to **Reality** in a **Creative** way. Often mistaken for 'memory' in the form of an ability to remember trivial facts and figures with no relation to real **Experience** or the way things actually are. Intelligence requires **Openness** to be **Real**.

## Interdependence

The **Reality** that everything is connected, even if the apparent distance between 'things' is disparate.

## Interpretation

Our best possible understanding of something based on what we have **Perceived** and **Conceptualised** of its **Reality**. Unfortunately, even our best interpretations are clouded by the **Veiled Veil**.

## Intention

In the service of our **Realness**, an intention is an itch we can't get rid of that leads us towards **Wholeness** in the form of our authentic, or self-actualised, self. In the service of the **Ego**, intentions are immediate **Desires** based on the **Judgement** that we are not living according to the **Idealised** image of ourselves that we constructed to hide from our own **Shame**.

## Judgement

The **Process** of attempting to bring whatever stands before us into the **Veiled Veil of Duality** by treating our positive/neutral value-based **Ideas** about it as the **Reality** of whatever is in question. Ultimately, the **Ego** is one big judgement but no judgement is **Certain** and so when we **Identify** with ego we lose ourselves in our **Realness**.

### **Knowing**

Any **Awareness** that we have about **Reality** that isn't purely **Conceptual** or **Idealistic** because it is rooted in more than just the **Intellect**.

### **Knowledge**

Things that we 'know' only in **Conceptual Interpretation**.

### **Magic Bullet**

Any offer of a **Panacea** that will solve every **Problem** in the world. Impossible because **The World** will always just be one big problem.

### **Make Real**

To take a negative of difficult situation or **Obstacle** and learn something from it that allows us to increase our connection to our own **Realness**.

### **Mechanistic System**

Any **System** designed by human beings that treats the majority of the people within it as being insensate cogs in the machine. These systems are **Unreal** because they are built around a 'fixed' view of human beings and force people into moulds that remove their **Humanity** at the expense of linear **Processes** results that are **Outcome-dependent**.

### **Meditation**

Any **Process** that allows you to tune into the **Present** moment and notice what you notice about yourself, **The World**, and **Reality**. The 'classic' version involves sitting still and breathing in some way, but anything that shows you the **Edge** of yourself could technically get you in the same state (riding a motorbike, having sex, listening to music, etc.).

## Mental Content

The clouds that float by within the inner experience of ourselves and the world (**Concepts**, emotions, **Expectations**, whatever).

## Misery

A state of living in extreme **Unreality**, thus making us feel bad about our own **Realness** and **The World**. Misery is what happens when you allow the **Friction** you carry to lead to endless **Frustration** and eventually snap.

## Neurotic

To carry the erroneous belief that **Order** precedes **Chaos** or to **Hide** from **Reality** because we find it **Painful** or believe that reality is a source of our demise, not a furnace for our creation in the form of real **Growth**. Being neurotic in this way is fundamentally rooted in the ideas that **Stasis** is **Truth** and a life on earth without limits is possible, whereas both of these ideas are major sources of **Frustration** in our lives. Any time we move away from reality and towards **Ego/Fragmentation** we are trying to live according to **Ideas** or **Concepts** disconnected from what is **Real**; when we do this we are epitomising ‘neurotic’ with the result of stunting our own **Growth**.

## Object

Anything that the attention of your subjective **Experience** passes over. For example, if you’re looking at a ‘tree’ then it is an object of your experience and you are the **Subject**.

## Obstacle

Anything that seems to get in the way of where we think we want to go but which is actually a foundation for getting to where we really want to be (in the form of our **Realness**).

## Object-Subject Boundary

The Illusory boundary that we place between **Objects** and **Subjects** when we are lost in assuming that the **Veiled Veil** of limited **Perception** and **Knowledge** is the way things actually are. In **Reality**, **Objects** and **Subjects** are part of the same **Interdependent System** and therefore depend on each other. For example, if you are a subject

looking at the object of a 'tree', then the experience you have depends on where you are in **Time, Space, and Causality**, as well as the mental **Representation** your brain shows you over the actual thing-in-itself. That object might exist in some form but not in the way you experience it without 'you' being in the equation.

### **One System + One System = One System**

The understanding that if everything is a part of the same **System** then there is only one **Relationship** that we **Fragment** for convenience and survival.

### **Openness**

The **Attitude** of living with as few **Fragmentary** blocks to our **Realness** and **Reality** as possible. More often than not, the things that are holding us back from **Real** connection to ourselves and by extension the reality around us are **Self-limiting Beliefs** and ideas that are fragments we have picked up somewhere outside of ourselves. Living with openness allows **The World** in reality to open to us and engenders **Creativity** because we're living beyond our outdated **Assumptions** about life.

### **Opinions**

Something that you HAVE, not that you ARE (as David Bohm said).

### **Order**

Any story that we tell ourselves to explain the **Chaos** that surrounds us. This doesn't mean that 'order' doesn't exist, but it does mean that it is usually a **Projection** of our thoughts out into **The World** and, if **Certain**, always a **Conceptual Illusion** because in a **Reality** experienced in **Flux** nothing can remain the same and measurement will only ever be 99.999% accurate at best.

### **Outcome-dependence**

A **Judgement** of something's value based only on the results that it gets. For example, if you are chasing a promotion and your **Self-image** depends on getting it, you have become outcome-dependent.

## Outcome-independence

Appreciating either the value of yourself or something else based on your relationship with its **Realness** over results. For example, if you are chasing that promotion and don't get it, you still have a healthy relationship with yourself (because you have found your realness).

## Pain

An **Inevitability** that shows us where we have room to **Grow Real**. If we can move to the other side of the pain, **Frustration**, and discomfort that we find ourselves feeling in either **Dialogue** or our lives themselves, we can live with less **Friction** between ourselves and **Reality**. Pain is a signal, not a command, but many of us choose to always see it as a command to run away from whatever seems to be its source – sometimes, we DO need to run away, but often the only way out and into a better life for ourselves is to go through it.

## Panacea

A fancy word for a **Magic Bullet**. The more **Neurotic** we are, the more we want there to be a panacea for all our ills and the more disappointment, **Frustration**, and eventual **Misery** we set ourselves up for in the long-term.

## Patterns

Behavioural repetitions that we can notice over the course of our lives, especially in our **Relationships** with others, but also in the way we chase after the things that we think will save us in some way. In general, these patterns are rooted in our unresolved 'stuff' from childhood and the shame that makes us run towards **Ego** over our **Realness**. If we don't become aware of these patterns (e.g. falling in love with unavailable people so we don't have to really commit, chasing easy goals instead of challenging ourselves because we fear failure, etc.) we will repeat them until the day we die and be more likely to die in **Misery**.

## Perception

Whatever our **Fragmented** bodies allow us to sense before we try and **Interpret** them with **Concepts/Knowlegde**.

## **Personal Revolution**

The **Process of Growing Real** by either putting oneself in a process of ridding oneself of one's **Illusions** by finding the **Edge**, or by being placed in a highly challenging situation that exposes the gap between one's **Ego** and **Reality** in the gap between **Expectation and Result**. The final lesson of a Personal Revolution is always the same: an acceptance of one's **Realness** and a shift to living predominantly from its foundation.

## **Personality**

A set of **Ideas** that we choose to **Identify** with based on our desired **Self-image** and the way we want to be seen by others. Personality is distinguished from **Character** which is the depth of our relationship with **Reality** - in the form of how prepared we are to face it - not our ideas about it alone.

## **Point of View**

A story that we tell ourselves based on the limited information we have about ourselves, **The World**, and **Reality** through the lens of the **Veiled Veil**. More often than not, this story is edited to make ourselves feel better about ourselves in our **Heroism**. Though we need points of view to function as human beings, we can brainwash ourselves and limit our growth by clinging to them with **Certainty** in order to avoid facing ourselves and our **Shame**.

## **Premise**

Any **Assumption** that we feed into an argument to reach some kind of conclusion.

## **Presence**

The sensation of connecting to the foundation of our own **Realness**, living from the inside out, and being in the moment. Presence is a state of high-level **Awareness** that allows us to be more responsive to ourselves so that we can better respond to others, **The World**, and **Reality** around us.

## Pride

The **Unreal** version of pride is a product of being so certain about our own **Certainty** that we lose touch with **Reality** and get lost in the **Ego**. Real 'pride' is based in unwavering **Self-Acceptance**, is **Outcome-independent**, and keeps us **Growing Real**. The unreal version prevents us growing real because it keeps us clinging to an addiction to self-sourced ego strokes.

## Principle of Charity

The principle of seeking the **Truth** in what people share with us instead of simply tearing it to pieces based on initial **Judgment**.

## Problem

A negative **Interpretation** of an inevitable **Obstacle** when, in **Reality**, the main problem is thinking we have problems by **Judging** whatever we are going through.

## Process

A series of **Events** that lead to a causal result. Everything that happens is a process, though we often lack the information to understand every step along the way and therefore have to rationalise or even deceive ourselves in order to trick ourselves into feeling we have **Closure** and that everything makes **Sense**.

## Projection

The art of seeing in others or **The World** around us what we are trying to **Hide** about ourselves from ourselves in **Reality**. This is one of the **Ego's** defence mechanisms that allows us to keep it in place and prevent ourselves from pushing through the **Edge** of whatever **Pain** or **Shame** we carry in ourselves so we can **Grow Real**.

## Real

Anything that is as it is in **Truth**. The **Problem** is that sometimes the things we think 'is' are just the things we show ourselves because of our **Fears** about **Reality**. This unfortunate belief is rooted in the **Idea** that reality is harmful in some way, when actually, the closer we move towards uncovering it, the more solid the foundation on which we build the rest of our lives will be. In relation to human behaviour,

'Real' refers to any intention that is rooted in **Wholeness** over **Fragmentation**, and therefore reality over **Ego**.

### **Real Communication**

The way of **Communicating** in a way that is rooted in a foundation of our **Realness** and which acknowledges that other people are capable of communicating from their realness in the same way. (See: **Dialogue**).

### **Real Human Being**

A human being who lives in relation to their nature and the nature of things as they actually are in **Reality**. This is opposed to a 'person' who lives primarily according to the **Ideas** about themselves, **The World**, and reality instead of their true experience of themselves without **Judgement**.

### **Realistic Expectations**

**Expectations** that prepare us for our own **Realness** and the **Reality** that surrounds us. Realistic Expectations help us to align ourselves with **Flux** over **Stasis** and prepare us to deal with the positive and negative **Change** in our lives. Carrying Realistic Expectations also allows us to live with less of the unnecessary **Friction** that eventually leads to **Misery**.

### **Reality**

The collective **Inevitabilities** of life as far as we know and experience it as **Fragmented** beings in a fragmented **World**: death, change, problems, obstacles, conflict and whatever else.

### **Realness**

The greatest understanding of whatever **Truth** you currently carry about yourself and the most unshakeable foundation for building yourself and your life upon.

### **Reflection**

Anything that reminds us of the past or our ideas about it in the present.

## Relationship

A connection between things. The universe is one big relationship having a relationship with itself.

## Relevance

Anything that will move a **Dialogue** towards the **Truth**.

Understanding the difference between what is relevant within the dialogue, as opposed to our **Desires** about it, based on the needs of our own **Ego** is vital to being able to communicate in a **Real** way.

## Representation

A version of something that we carry in our heads alone. If we see a 'tree', we are seeing our brain's representation of it, not the 'tree' in itself.

## Revolution

Any **Process** that fundamentally changes our approach to living as **Real** human beings in a real **Human-shaped World**. Revolution happens when some kind of **Event** shows **Humanity** on a mass scale that the gap between our **Interpretations**, or **Expectations of Reality** and reality itself is wider than we ever imagined. Revolution can happen on a personal, social, and universal scale.

## Role

Roles are masks that we wear in different **Relationships** to bring a sense of **Control** over the **Uncertainty** of having to deal with other human beings. If we **Identify** with these roles, we begin to think that we are the mask we have worn to protect ourselves and slowly begin to destroy ourselves by preventing our ability to **Grow Real**. The roles of others are dependent on the roles that we play and so if we begin to remove the mask, people will often fight us to ensure that we keep it on (so they don't have to change too).

## Schema

The way we have organised the **Concepts** that we carry about ourselves, **The World**, and **Reality** into sets of **Ideas** or mental models that help us explain things and motivate us to behave in **Certain** way.

Breaking these schemas allows us to break the unhealthy, or **Unreal, Patterns** we have been living out so that we can **Grow real**.

### **Self-limiting Beliefs**

Any beliefs that keep us from acknowledging our potential in the form of our **Realness**.

### **Sense**

A story that is satisfactory enough not to cause too much dissonance or **Frustration** between ourselves and **Reality**.

### **Self-acceptance**

An honest understanding of where we currently happen to be in relation to where we want to be in the future. This kind of self-acceptance is a foundation on which to keep building our lives without **Judgement**, because it is rooted in our **Realness** and **Reality**. It is not an excuse to stop living our lives, by giving into **Stasis**, or to rationalise our **Shame** away instead of facing it as an **Illusion**.

### **Self-image**

An idol of ourselves that we place between our **Realness** and **Reality** in order to function in **The World**. If our self-image is built upon **Realistic Expectations** we will have less **Friction** in our lives, get more done, and be 'happier' in the long-term.

### **Self-mastery**

The healthiest possible relationship between our **Biological Wiring** and the **Social Programming** that we allow ourselves to be influenced by.

### **Shame**

The feeling that we are fundamentally 'wrong' in some way, have done something 'wrong', or that what we are about to do is 'wrong'. The more shame we carry about our **Realness**, most often because of how it was received in our childhood, the more likely we are to run towards the **Ego**. In **Reality**, there is no shame, as 'wrong' and 'right' are value **Judgements** and **Duality** does not exist. Healthy 'shame', can bring people together by showing us that our intentions move away from

**Wholeness**; unhealthy shame stops human beings from living with healthy boundaries and **Growing Real** by locking them in a web of **Fragmentation**.

### **Should**

Any external idea about an appropriate way of living that we take on as our own without question or looking at in alignment with our own **Insight**. A major source of **Social Programming**.

### **Social Programming**

Any **Ideas** that have taken root from outside ourselves and which block our view of our **Realness**, instead of leading us towards it.

### **Sociocultural System**

A **System** that allows individuals to have autonomy etc. but which is limited by seeing human beings as more **Intellectual** and **Interpretational** than **Creative**.

### **Stasis**

The erroneous **Assumption** that it is possible for anything to remain the same other than the **Whole** in itself.

### **Subject**

Anything that is able to experience **Objects**.

### **Sub-personality**

Minor parts of our overall **Personality** that exists because they once helped us to survive in a specific situation, relationship, or environment. Some sub-personalities are long since expired but we keep attempting to breathe life into them and end up bringing **Friction** into our lives because we have over-identified with them.

### **Symbols**

The linguistic, **Conceptual**, and cognitive content of our mental experience.

## System

Any **Relationship** between discernible parts and **Processes** that form other relationships.

## 'The World'

Your collective **Ideas** about the planet and how it operates. The World is **unreal** because it is a pure **Interpretation** based in **Fragments** of the **Veiled Veil** (nobody can have, be, or understand the whole of it in **Reality**).

## Time, Space, and Causality

The **Fragmented** patterns that our fragmented bodies project upon **Reality** as part of the **Veiled Veil** we use to make **Sense** of it.

## Trust

The idea that **Relationships** between people can lead to more **Realness** as they are fundamentally rooted in it.

## Uncertainty

The only 'certain' thing due to living out our lives in the **Veiled Veil** and the gap between **Expectation and Result**.

## Unhealthy

Anything **Unreal**.

## Unreal

Any intention that causes somebody to move towards **Fragmentation** or anything that is rooted predominantly in **Ego**.

## Veiled Veil

The combination of limited **Perception** and limited **Knowledge** that keeps us from wholes in **Reality**. Human beings live behind this 'Veiled Veil' at all times, because we exist within **Fragmented** bodies, but we can peek behind it if we blur the **Object-subject Boundary**. Remembering what we see here allows us to live with more **Realness** on a day to day basis as it allows us to bring more of the **Whole** into our lives and have a **Real** foundation on which to build.

## WHAT

The content of our **Communication**.

## Wholeness

The totality of everything in **Truth** beyond **Fragments**.

## Whole System

A **System** taken as a whole **Relationship** instead of numerous **Fragmented** parts treated as '**Whole**'. Shifts us into thinking in terms of **Interdependence** and therefore **Reality**.

## World of Necessity

**The World** as it is according to biological and physical **Inevitability** as we **Experience** it as biological **Fragments** on a fragmented planet.

## World of Relationships

The **Reality** we live in when we are able to manage our **Biological Wiring** and **Social Programming** in order to bridge the **World of Necessity** and the **World of Symbols**.

## WHY

Our reason or **Intention** for **Communicating**.

## World of Symbols

**The World** as conceptualised in **Intellect**, language, or **Ideals** alone. We need **Symbols** to make sense of **Reality** and construct our **Points of View**, but, like **Concepts**, symbols are only signposts to reality, not reality itself.

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